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ATTITUDES TOWARD NEGROES, 1865-1900.

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AFTERMATH OF SLAVERY: DOCTRINE OF SEPARATION
TOWARD NEGROES, 1865-1890

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AFTERMATH OF SLAVERY: SOUTHERN ATTITUDES
TOWARD NEGROES, 1865-1900

A
DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
For the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Claude Hunter Nolen, B.S., M.A.

Austin, Texas

June, 1963

AFTERMATH OF SLAVERY: SOUTHERN ATTITUDES
TOWARD NEGROES, 1865-1900

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March, 1963

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PART I

THE SOUTHERN IMAGE OF THE NEGRO

CHAPTER I

PHYSICAL AND MORAL INHERITANCE

Thinkers of the Old South were compelled to challenge the principle of the essential equality of all men. If all men are equal, all have every right to participate in economic, political, and social affairs on equal terms. No man is born booted and spurred to ride his inferiors; and society must reflect this fact. Within such a climate of opinion slavery could be justified only by positing differences in the innate characteristics of the white and black races so great that the black race would appear to be incapable of freedom.¹

When the slaves were freed, the old argument retained validity to the Southerner. That argument, whatever its elaboration, rested upon the keystone of Negro inferiority. Were the freedmen really like other men, and ought they to share equally with all others in the privileges and responsibilities of free society? The Southerner, fixed in his ideas, and still wishing to profit from unfree labor refused to admit that he had himself created the image of the

¹For a thorough exposition of this theme, see Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma (New York, 1944).

Negro. The black man, he believed, was free from the individual master but remained a slave of society.

Thus the system of thought which justified slavery was kept practically intact, with a little tinkering here and there to adjust it to new conditions. Science, the Scriptures, the experience of mankind were still alleged to show that black men were born to be servants. In this way the Southerner reconciled freedom and servitude in the New South just as he had in the Old South.

* * *

The South was interested in a biology which would set off the Negro and evidence his inferiority. This application of science to justify a particular social policy found the Negro to have a head thick as a goat's for absorbing heavy blows but limited in capacity to hold brains; a skin that reflected or absorbed heat and exuded copious amounts of perspiration with a distinctive stench, unbearable in the close confines of a gentleman's drawing room; monkey-like arms; flat feet; a sensitive heel; a brutish physiognomy--all of which marked him as a creature useful for hard labor, but good for little else. Such a perversion of science lent itself to an extraordinary

viciousness. An enthusiastic devotee of this popular biology might discover that, while investigating the animal traits of the Negro, he had revealed an ape; a community trained up to abhor the lasciviousness of the brute might self-righteously burn an alleged rapist at the stake.

The first step in constructing this system of biology was to define the Negro as intellectually weak, and then to search for physiological characteristics which explained this trait. At about the age of puberty, it was claimed, when the black child's apparent intellectual equality with white children ceased, there occurred a rapid thickening of the skull, and the cerebellum, or animal portion of the brain, became supreme, ruling over the adult Negro organism.² Judge Thomas Norwood insisted that the black man's cranium accounted for his low order of intelligence and absolute immobility for thousands of years. "As he was at Creation's dawn in Africa, so he is today, without initiative, invention, ambition, or

²Thomas M. Norwood, Address on the Negro (Savannah, Ga., c. 1908), 6.

ability to move forward."³ The belief in the Negro's walnut-like skull was so universally entertained that a country editor could amuse his readers with a story that a Negro was "fortunately shot in the head." The bullet, penetrating only "a couple of inches," did not reach the brain, thus the man's life was spared.⁴ The Negro had always known about his thick cranium. For untold centuries he had used his head as a weapon of attack by butting, "as is the custom of rams."⁵

The Negro's face, like his cranium, revealed a great deal to the acute lay biologist. It expressed a capacity for "pure sensuous felicity, the simple joy of animal existence." Round, swarthy features, fringes of tropical eyes, flashing smile--all marked the black man "as a child of the sun, tractable, emotional. . . ."⁶ The Negro face, it seemed to a "Southern farm girl,"

³Ibid., 6.

⁴Carrollton, West Alabamian, April 30, 1873.

⁵Charles Carroll, The Negro A Beast or In the Image of God? (St. Louis, 1900), 46.

⁶Porte Crayon [David H. Strother], "Our Negro Schools," Harper's Magazine, XLIX (1874), 457.

revealed a stagnant intellect. Perhaps "an infusion of Caucasian blood" would dissipate the simian type, improving the shape of the retreating forehead, changing the contour of the jaw, and "giving weight and measurement" to the inactive brain.⁷ The entire face was too comprehensive an area for some specialists, who concentrated attention on the structure and length of noses,⁸ the character of the hair, or the eyes and ears, of the inferior race. The South Carolina physician, Dr. C. W. Kollock, reported that in studying the "purest type of African negro" in the United States, the coal-black variety of the Sea Islands, he had never found a true case of myopia. He did find one near-sighted black, but concluded that a complete history of that particular family would turn up a white man somewhere, as it was well known that all primitives were endowed with excellent vision.⁹

The black man's skin, also, was believed to possess certain peculiar qualities other than distinctiveness in

⁷Jenny Woodville, "Rambling Talks About the Negro," Lippincott's Magazine, XXII (1878), 621-626.

⁸Baton Rouge Capitolian, September 15, 1883.

⁹Cited in George R. Stetson, "The Eye, the Ear, and the Commonweal of Whites and Blacks," Liberia, Bulletin No. 10, February, 1897, 39.

color. The "odoriferous African" made a good cotton hand,¹⁰ because his skin radiated heat in the shade, while it secreted oil which kept it in a state of shine, thus deflecting intense solar rays.¹¹ But the authorities would engage in disputes. Some claimed that it was perspiration, not shine, that explained the black's ability to endure heat. An advocate of this position argued that "the coloring matter absorbs heat freely, carries it into the system, and there it drives the water to the surface, which in evaporation takes off a large amount of heat in latent form." The Negro made an excellent field worker because he was "eminently a sweating animal."¹² But this remarkable sweating capacity, however useful in the field, made the black a pariah in white society, for it rendered him objectionable in the jury box, the legislature, and the drawing room.¹³ During Radical reconstruction the "sweetness

¹⁰New Orleans Crescent, November 15, 1865.

¹¹Robert Tomes, "About Heat," Harper's Magazine, XXXVIII (1869), 502. Dark pigment may have survival value for tropical people, see Ruth Benedict, Race: Science and Politics (New York, 1959), 41.

¹²Civis [Bennett Puryear], The Public School in Its Relation to the Negro (Richmond, 1877), 5.

¹³Ibid., 5.

of loyalty perfumed the air"¹⁴ of legislatures and political meetings, and white men "held their noses,"¹⁵ against the "fish-like smell" of the monster.¹⁶

Skin characteristics helped explain why Negroes were so well adapted to work in the hot fields, why they were adapted to the South but languished in the North, and, in the minds of some theorists, why they constantly tended southward, until at some future date they would be found only in the Lower South. Henry Gannett, of the United States Geological Survey, and consultant to the United States Census Bureau, following this argument, which had been advanced by Louis Agassiz, and echoed by Lord Bryce and others, though not by most Southerners, claimed that since Negroes flourished only in regions of high temperature they were slowly congregating in the Gulf states. An elaborate analysis of census data convinced Gannett that either Negroes must migrate southward or fail to maintain their

¹⁴Fort Smith Herald, September 17, 1870.

¹⁵Carrollton West Alabamian, January 26, 1870.

¹⁶Prospero [Robert Buchanan], Caliban (New York, 1868), 31. See also Carroll, The Negro A Beast or In the Image of God?, 62-63.

numbers. Because the ecological conditions of the Gulf states proved highly favorable to Negro multiplication, Gannett surmised that this was their natural country.¹⁷ Such an argument was not particularly welcome to the whites of the Gulf region, who thought that they already had quite enough black workers, if properly managed, and too many black voters. Nevertheless, some white supremacists endorsed the belief that Negroes would gravitate to the lower latitudes of the United States "by Divine enactment." Having reached this proper habitat, they would, however, discover the white man already on the spot ready to direct them with "superior sagacity" in the performance of that kind of labor best calculated to promote their happiness and the interests of mankind.¹⁸

The inclination of the white man was to believe that race differences were stamped upon every organ and upon the whole organism. Physiological differences were so great that treatment which restored the feverish white man to health made the Negro worse than before. A

¹⁷"The Negro's Present Condition," Southern States Farm Magazine, V (1898), 492-495; James Bryce, The American Commonwealth, 2 vols. (rev. ed., New York, 1910), 512-513.

¹⁸Puryear, The Public School in Its Relations to the Negro, 5.

physician of Aniston, Alabama, claimed that the coarseness of the Negroes' organism made "them require about double the dose of ordinary medicine used by whites."¹⁹ If the Negro required powerful medication, or was afflicted, as many thought, with peculiar diseases, it was because inferiority was stamped plainly on his physical being, which forever constituted a barrier to "schemes of equality and fraternity."²⁰

In assembling biological evidence to prove the Negro an inferior man, the Southerner faced the temptation to consign him to a lower order of creation. If the overwhelming majority of Southerners were never so blind, some extremists drove the Negro to the very edge of the gulf separating man from monkey, and a handful tried to push him across.

The New Orleans Crescent, for example, described a "fine, likely lot of big strapping negroes--each with a face as black as ink, eyes and teeth as white as snow,

¹⁹Carroll, The Negro A Beast or In the Image of God, 61.

²⁰Puryear, The Public School in Its Relation to the Negro, 8.

hair as woolly as a poodle's, and a mouth as large as the Mammoth cave. . . ."21 Such description came easily to the editor of this newspaper, for he was a great admirer of J. C. Nott's Types of Mankind (1854), which, he thought, established beyond doubt the separate origin of the Negro, and demonstrated that the black man was easily "domesticated" but reverted to wildness when thrown back upon himself. This editor corroborated Nott by an account of a band of freedmen who, abandoning the highest degree of imitative civilization of which they were capable, had put on breechcloths and begun to worship toads, frogs, and snakes along a bayou near the Gulf.²² The editor of the Southern Magazine, imbued with an identical spirit, described Africa as a "land where man-like apes and ape-like men horribly caricature humanity," and where "hideous customs" and "frightful forms of suffering and death" prevail.²³

Some editors did not hastily abandon the notion

²¹March 19, 1866.

²²July 16, 1866. For Nott's work, see Josiah Clark Nott and George R. Gliddon, Types of Mankind (Philadelphia, 1854). See also William Stanton, The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes Toward Race in America, 1815-1859 (Chicago, 1960).

²³XVI (1875), 320.

of the separate creation of the races, evidently reflecting the opinion of a body of readers who preferred not to acknowledge any kinship with or responsibility for their black neighbors, lest they seem deserving of the privileges accorded kinfolk. The editor of the Sunny South in 1875 claimed that Mosaic history was the history of the Caucasian race only. How the other races came into existence, he said, was unknown, and need not be known, for if "their muscles or their brains" could be made to promote the comfort of Adam's descendants, they might be preserved, otherwise they must give way and eventually be exterminated.²⁴ Fourteen years later, in 1889, the Sunny South reiterated its endorsement of the "diversity of origin" theory.²⁵

Charles Gayarré, joining the assault on the Negro's human worth, denounced Radical Reconstruction, "when bipeds hardly superior to Caracalla's horse were armed with judicial, legislative and executive power in the South."²⁶

²⁴November 6, 1875. See the reply by a reader upholding the unity of races, November 13, 1875, and a restatement of the editor's position, December 9, 1875.

²⁵October 12, 1889.

²⁶"The Southern Question," North American Review, CXXV (1877), 482.

The Radical regime in Louisiana, he wrote, was "a kitchen uprising of impish dwarfs, of creeping things used to the chain of servitude, crouching under the flagellations of centuries," and dependent on federal support, for in themselves "there was flesh and blood, such as it was, but no intellectual and moral entity whatever."²⁷ Reconstruction was a "saturnalia of the most brutish appetites," of "matter over spirit," of "subjection to the gorilla."²⁸ A generation later James K. Vardaman, governor of Mississippi and United States senator, believed that the Negro grew "wool" instead of true hair and was characterized by other peculiar anatomical features. He emphasized the Negro's alleged lack of the combative spirit, and of the ability to organize and to create, as the most significant inherited traits making the race a footstool barely human.²⁹

Though few Southerners were to be found arguing that the races were created separately, and fewer still supposed the Negro to be less than human,³⁰ the inimitable

²⁷Ibid., 483.

²⁸Ibid., 483-484.

²⁹Paraphrased in Archibald S. Coody, The Race Question from the White Chief (Vicksburg, Miss., 1944), 46-48.

³⁰Hilary Herbert, "The Problems That Present Themselves," in Southern Society for the Promotion of the Study of Race Conditions and Problems in the South, Race Problems of the South: Proceedings of the First Annual Conference (Richmond, 1900), 32. Herbert warned

John W. DeForest, novelist and official of the Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina, testifies to the commotion caused by the non-human theory:

There was a prodigious movement in the Southern mind in consequence of Dr. Cartwright's discovery that God created three kinds of beings, to wit, men, 'living creatures,' and beasts; and that the negroes, being evidently 'living creatures,' are lower than humans, though not so low as animals. This remarkable 'reading,' having been popularized by a writer signing as 'Ariel,' was used with great effect by Governor Perry [of South Carolina] against universal suffrage, much to the confusion of certain Radical pundits, who did not know what the Governor was talking about.³¹

"Ariel" published an array of "Biblical facts" to show that the Negro was created as a beast, the slave of Adam; that this beast was denied immortality; that it was the tempter in the Garden of Eden; that God destroys all nations which mix with the beast or allow it equality; and that mulattoes crucified Christ.³²

"Prospero," unlike Ariel, was willing to concede humanity of a low order to the Negro in the manner of

that if generally accepted such errors "would bring damnation to the Southern people." Ibid., 32.

³¹A Union Officer in the Reconstruction (edited by James H. Croushore and David Morris Potter; New Haven, 1948), 192.

³²Ariel [Buckner H. Payne], Ariel's Reply to the Rev. John A. Seiss, D.D., of Philadelphia (Nashville, 1876), 5-94.

"preadamic" creation. The Bible, he argued, had been wrongly interpreted to support the unity of mankind, whereas it clearly taught the diverse origin of the various races.³³ There were men upon the earth before Adam, men only one step removed from the chimpanzee. The Negro, a descendant of the preadamic man, was closer to the chimpanzee than to the Anglo-Saxon. All great naturalists recognized the similarity of the cerebral structure of the Negro and of the ape. "The cat-eyed Chinaman, the African Hottentot, the Malay, the Laplander and the Esquimaux all sprang from the primitive races of mankind."³⁴

The Caucasian had never been a savage. The Negro, on the other hand, in his native haunts, was always a savage; deprived of the support of the Caucasian, he speedily relapsed into barbarism. Unlike the preadamite, the Caucasian had not sprung out of the earth. The Creator, intending him to be an artist, performed the work of the Divine Artist in creating him, and endowed him with the love of the beautiful. But the preadamite was insensible to art: the Negro never planted a rose.

³³The following is a summary of the pamphlet Caliban (New York, 1868), by "Prospero" [Robert Buchanan].

³⁴Ibid., 9.

The Caucasian, as head of all races, was tested in the Garden of Eden. The tempter, called a serpent, was one of the preadamites. The antagonism between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent rendered amalgamation the vilest of crimes. Cain went out among the preadamites, who welcomed the felon and gave him a wife. The resulting miscegenation was a heinous crime, an attempt to set aside the ordinances of Heaven.

The mongrel posterity of Cain attained nothing more than a semblance of the Caucasian's civilization. As punishment for the mixing of the blood of the preadamite with the blood of Adam, the Creator sent the flood over the area occupied by these vile creatures; the unmixed preadamites, however, like the pure Caucasians, were spared. After the flood the Caucasian drove the Negro into barbaric Africa.

In the South the Caucasians committed the sin of Cain, not by owning slaves, but by amalgamating with them. For contaminating their blood with that of the lowest of humans, they were punished by subjection to the accomplices of their crime. God permitted the most wicked white men the world had ever seen to inflict this penalty. "Ruled by self-interest and goaded by rancorous hate, they have

perpetrated a crime of colossal magnitude; and, in subjecting the Caucasian to the negro--the highest type of humanity to the lowest--they have turned traitors to their race, their religion, and their God."³⁵ But this land was a white man's country. The Negro was an intruder, an alien, and a vagabond, and the nation would suffer as long as he was allowed any political rights whatever. To subject the Caucasian to the Negro was a worse crime than to place the Negro under the baboon.

"Ariel" and "Prospero" played fast and loose with the Scriptures and science and produced the monstrous type of offspring which they imagined the mulatto to be. But their ideas had a flickering sort of viability. Charles Carroll, following "Ariel," endeavored to prove in 1900 that the Negro was a beast;³⁶ and Albert Stowe Lee-Craft, following "Prospero" in part, and "Ariel" in part, and the "Hamitic origin" in part, offered to the world the superior Caucasian, the inferior Negro, and the mulatto, or "mule nigger." The Negro, Lee-Craft wrote, could attain immortality if he obeyed and worked for the

³⁵Ibid., 30.

³⁶The Negro A Beast or In the Image of God? (St. Louis, 1900).

white man, but the "mule nigger," being neither white nor black, and conceived in violation of Divine law, was denied everlasting life.³⁷

Carroll, on the other hand, argued that atheism erroneously taught "that all bipeds, with articulate speech, the erect posture, and well developed hand and foot, and the ability to make and handle tools, are men."³⁸ Carroll supposed that the best scientific information demonstrated that the head, jaws, chin, neck, arms, fist, lungs, nerves, heel, and feet of the Negro proved him to be an ape.³⁹ Through scriptural interpretation he "exploded" both the "Hamitic theory" of the Negro's origin and the "atheist's" theory of evolution.⁴⁰ Science informed Carroll that the Negro was an ape who stood "at the head of the ape family," as the lion stood "at the head of the cat family."⁴¹ The Negro, he claimed, was the only

³⁷The Devil's Inkwell: A Story of Humanity, Embracing Biblical Evidence Establishing Irrefutable and Utter Supremacy of the White Man on the Earth Since the Beginning of Historical Time (Houston, 1923), passim, especially 32-46.

³⁸The Negro A Beast or In the Image of God?, 48.

³⁹Ibid., 46-87.

⁴⁰Ibid., 75-87.

⁴¹Ibid., 87.

"man-like ape," while the chimpanzee and gorilla were "merely Negro-like apes."⁴² Moreover, "scriptural and scientific evidence" proved that God designed the "pure-blooded white" to perform mental labor, and the ape, called Negro, to "perform the manual labor."⁴³ Carroll believed that everyone with the slightest taint of Negro blood was nothing but an ape.⁴⁴ All the Chinese and Indians, all the red, yellow, and brown peoples, were apes; they were offspring of the Caucasian human and the Negro beast.⁴⁵

* * *

It sufficed for the majority of Southerners to define Negroes as inferior men swayed "by powers and passions . . . ineradicable from the flesh" that came "to them from their fathers."⁴⁶ These inherited characteristics all pointed to the natural dependence of Negroes upon whites.

⁴²Ibid., 87.

⁴³Ibid., 102.

⁴⁴Ibid., 108-109, 129, 165-193.

⁴⁵Ibid., 165-193.

⁴⁶Sunny South, December 9, 1876; see also Nashville Christian Advocate, May 2, 1891.

Negroes were improvident, unable to plan for the future because they were creatures of the present. All they wanted was kind treatment, "as little labor as possible, indulgence in sensual appetites, and a hot sun to bask in."⁴⁷ The daily round of freedmen consisted in sleeping and waking, "with a struggle between morning and evening to get enough to put into their mouths." They were unaware of thrift or progress. Now and then they attended a religious meeting and, perhaps, had "experiences," and were converted. Thus they went through today, and every day.⁴⁸ They dressed in rags six days and wore expensive clothes on the seventh; comfortably labored in broiling heat on a work-day, yet indulged in the luxury of an umbrella on a holiday; cheerfully walked miles on week nights to visit friends, then spent their earnings for a carriage drive on Sunday.⁴⁹

The Negro was "placable and kindly--the fortunate

⁴⁷Gayarre, "The Southern Question," North American Review, CXXV (1877), 490.

⁴⁸Edward King, "The Great South: Southern Mountain Rambles: In Tennessee, and South Carolina," Scribner's Monthly, VIII (1874), 16.

⁴⁹J. B. Killebrew, "How to Deal with the Negro," Southern States Farm Magazine, V (1898), 485-86.

possessor of a sweet, loving, and generous nature,"⁵⁰ the "happiest mortal in existence."⁵¹ He delighted in church meetings, parades, "craps," and midnight dances.⁵² No laborer in the world exhibited such light-heartedness, or was "more enlivened by merriment and jollity."⁵³ His joy burst forth in music, for which he had a talent equal to that of the Italian.⁵⁴ Thus he had been as a slave, and thus he was, in lesser measure, after redemption. But if he were disturbed by fanatics, then "we may look almost in vain for the old songs and dances, the hearty laugh and ready jest."⁵⁵ The burden of responsibility which came with freedom had, it was sometimes argued, a melancholy effect: "while Cuffey has not laid down the shovel and

⁵⁰Henry Watterson, "The Solid South," North American Review, CXXVIII (1879), 54.

⁵¹Sunny South, December 4, 1880.

⁵²Killebrew, "How to Deal with the Negro," Southern States Farm Magazine, V (1898), 485.

⁵³F. A. Shoup, "Has the Southern Pulpit Failed?" North American Review, CXXX (1880), 595.

⁵⁴Strother, "Our Negro Schools," Harper's Magazine, XLIX (1874), 433. Helen M. Ludlow, "Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute," Harper's Magazine, XLVIII (1873), 684.

⁵⁵Shoup, "Has the Southern Pulpit Failed?" North American Review, CXXX (1880), 595.

the hoe, as he once thought he was going to do, he has almost entirely hung up the fiddle and the bow."⁵⁶

The South was driven to clothe the Negro in happiness. If in a Christian society the subordinate Negro were turbulent, restive, dissatisfied, striving for improvement, this would show that it was not his nature to be subordinate. Necessarily the dependent Negro, slave or semi-slave, was seen to be as happy as a child, while the radical, political Negro was a "devil incarnate; a barbarian, useful to the basest purposes. . . ."⁵⁷

Under external control the Negro might be good or bad, for he was imitative, and, like a chameleon, reflected the character of his white master.⁵⁸ His greatest pride was identification with a white family of reputation, but his imitativeness and dependence could be exacerbating if his white master were a corrupt carpetbagger or, perhaps, a "traitor" to the South. In that case evil influence

⁵⁶Sunny South, November 8, 1879.

⁵⁷Watterson, "The Solid South," North American Review, CXXVIII (1879), 54.

⁵⁸Carrollton West Alabamian, January 31, 1872; Southern Bivouac, II (1887), 710-712.

could spread and contaminate the whole black mass.⁵⁹

Thus the South was quickly incensed at white troublemakers from "abroad" and at the "few wicked men" of the Negro class.

Whether the Negro seemed good or bad, "under his covering of imitated manners" slumbered "the passions of a mental organization" differing widely from the white's.⁶⁰ The aping Negro apparently did put the white master on his best behavior, because Sambo straightway began to stagger when he saw his former master zigzagging in drunkenness. The drunken Negro was not so much to blame, commented an editor, "for he but follows the bent of his constitutionally weak nature in copying the bad example set before him."⁶¹

Along with his other qualities of servitude, the Negro was said to inherit a disposition to obey. If United States troops were withdrawn from the South, the Negroes would, according to a New Orleans editor in 1867,

⁵⁹New Orleans Crescent, August 3, 1866; Sunny South, July 24, 1886.

⁶⁰N. S. Shaler, "An Ex-Southerner in South Carolina," Atlantic Monthly, XXVI (1870), 60. See also Henry W. Grady, "In Plain Black and White: A Reply to Mr. Cable," Century Magazine, XXIX (1885), 910.

⁶¹Carrollton West Alabamian, January 31, 1872.

submit themselves to the guidance of those who have always constituted the political community in these States; whilst, coerced by federal authority, they have arranged themselves in antagonism to the white people, and have been forced to aid in the consummation of schemes of the very meaning of which they are profoundly ignorant.⁶²

Later the editor of The Southern Bivouac endeavored to show that nature had formed the Negro "for obedience" by pointing out that the blacks had obeyed in turn the slaveholder, the temporarily stronger Union official, and the "redeemer." In short, the Negro was subject to power, and always to the greatest power.⁶³ Thus the Southerner explained that strange phenomenon, the Negro who seemed independent, even aggressive, during the brief period of "Black Reconstruction." All he had actually done was obey the power dominant at the moment.

Planters and statesmen, clerks and clergymen, agreed that the Negro was a thief by inheritance. According to the Wilmington Journal, bands of Negroes in every county of North Carolina in 1868 lived on the fruits of theft.⁶⁴

⁶²New Orleans Crescent, December 4, 1867.

⁶³Editorial, "The Negro in the South," Southern Bivouac, II (1887), 710-712.

⁶⁴December 11, 1868.

A Georgia editor observed that Negroes believed whites owed them a living. Shouting on the way home from church, they stole pigs, turkeys, chickens, melons, and roasting-ears.⁶⁵ A Congregational minister of Tennessee declared that the Negro's "most conspicuous saints have oftentimes been known to shout and exercise themselves with all the fervor of ecstatic joy until 2 o'clock in the morning, and then make a happy breakfast on some neighbor's shoat or chicken."⁶⁶ A citizen of Opelousas, Louisiana, thought that his neighbors would be dependent upon the Midwest for provisions as long as the incorrigible Negro remained among them. The richest part of St. Landry Parish, where most of the people were white, raised all that was needed, but in the Negro areas all the hogs and chickens were stolen from the barnyard, and the corn from the fields. Still, the Louisiana planter and his family were too proud to do their own work, and would "keep on hiring the negro and get poorer every day."⁶⁷ A clever farmer suggested that

⁶⁵Sunny South, September 29, 1877.

⁶⁶N. M. Long, "Comparative Value of Man's Intellectual Powers," a sermon delivered January 15, 1890, in Sermons and Addresses (Memphis, 1906), 243.

⁶⁷Anonymous, Louisville Home and Farm, June 15, 1879.

the chickens be allowed to roost in trees, where they were absolutely beyond the reach of pilfering hands.⁶⁸

The Rev. Henry J. Fox, president of the University of South Carolina during the Radical regime, challenged the assertion that Negroes were congenital thieves, arguing that they had developed thieving habits under the patriarchal system of bondage. Indeed, they had become ingenious casuists: "If chicken eat corn, only turn massa corn into massa chicken; he no tief. If hog root through potato rows, he no tief; only turn massa potato into massa hog. If nigger eat corn, and chicken, and hog, he no tief; all massa's yet."⁶⁹ Under freedom, the black was giving up slave habits, Fox said, even though the South would not admit it.⁷⁰

Petty thieving was only one of a legion of moral failings thought to characterize the colored man's make-up. The Southerner acknowledged that a few Negroes were well-behaved, at least when not under the domination of

⁶⁸In Ibid., January 15, 1880.

⁶⁹"The Negro," Methodist Quarterly Review, LVII (1875), 94.

⁷⁰Ibid., 94.

passion;⁷¹ usually they had been trained as slaves, or by parents who had been slaves. The vast body of the race, on the other hand, lay like a "sluggish mass of uncooled lava over a large section of the country, burying some sections and affecting the whole."⁷² Southerners "without exception" bore witness to the fact that, not counting a minute fraction, the black race did not advance at all in morality.⁷³ Unfortunately the fountain was "tainted at the source." The Negro lacked any idea of morality, because he lacked the instinct upon which such an idea could be founded.⁷⁴

Perhaps it was unjust to censure the Negro for immorality, if the moral sense could not be found in his inheritance. If he left one wife and took another, without marriage or divorce, was he not merely following his inherent instincts?⁷⁵ The imperious sex impulse in his

⁷¹Thomas Nelson Page, The Negro: The Southerner's Problem (New York, 1904), 63.

⁷²Ibid., 64.

⁷³Ibid., 81.

⁷⁴Ibid., 62-64. See also Watterson, "The Solid South," North American Review, CXXVIII (1879), 47-58.

⁷⁵Coody, The Race Question from the White Chief, 41.

makeup swept aside all restraint. Sexual immorality characterized all black people, educated or ignorant, rich or poor. It was almost impossible to find a chaste Negro over fifteen, according to Thomas Nelson Page.⁷⁶ The white Southerner understood it to be common knowledge that the black preacher was as much an adulterer as anyone in his congregation.

If the Negro slept by day and roamed about at night, was lazy, lacked initiative, knew no government, was devoid of ambition, had no honor, experienced no shame, was a thief without a conscience, it was because he surrendered, as he must, to the racial traits bestowed upon him by African ancestors.

They're the meanest, triflingest creaturs a-goin' . . . Thar ain't no good side to 'em. You can't find a white streak in 'em, if you turn 'em wrong side outwards and back again. . . . All the men are thieves, and all the women are prostitutes. It's their natur' to be that way, and they never'll be no other way.⁷⁷

But the white South, if let alone by meddlers ignorant of the freedman's heredity, could and would discipline him, making him again valuable to himself and to society as he had been under slavery.

⁷⁶Page, The Negro: The Southerner's Problem, 83-84.

⁷⁷Cited by DeForest, A Union Officer in the Reconstruction, 101.

The Negro was said to require rigid external control because he was devoid of a conscience, and was marked by "coarseness and vulgarity inseparable from a low grade of humanity."⁷⁸ When a desire to indulge his bad nature swept over him, extremists declared, he would do anything, commit arson, burglary, murder, or outrage a child. And he was never the penitent wracked by remorse. He could dine heartily and sleep deeply with blood on his hands. "A bad negro is the most horrible human creature upon the earth, the most brutal and merciless,"⁷⁹ Even ministers or teachers "are never made cowards by conscience, nor do they suffer the stings of remorse."⁸⁰ Taking into consideration such slavery to passion, it was in the interest of society that the Negro's freedom be curbed.

With abundant reason the Negro scholar, W. E. B. DuBois, complained in 1897 that "while sociologists gleefully count his bastards and his prostitutes, the very soul of the toiling, sweating black man is darkened by the

⁷⁸Noah K. Davis, "The Negro in the South," Forum, I (1886), 130.

⁷⁹Charles H. Smith, "Have American Negroes Too Much Freedom?" Forum, XVI (1893), 181.

⁸⁰Ibid., 181.

shadow of a vast despair." White men, he wrote, learnedly called attention to "culture against barbarism, learning against ignorance, purity against crime, the 'higher' against the 'lower' races." The black man, he said, accepted the degree of prejudice which was founded on a just homage to civilization. But there arose in his breast a sickening despair before the "ridicule and systematic humiliation, the distortion of fact and wanton license of fancy, the cynical ignoring of the better and boisterous welcoming of the worse, the all-pervading desire to inculcate disdain for everything black."⁸¹

There was little the Negro could do to alter this dark image in the mind of the South. By heroic efforts he might as an individual overcome the temptations inherent in his almost hopeless environment. Nevertheless, the South was determined to believe that the Negro was an inferior human being. It helped, even forced him, to be as bad as he was said to be: it imposed upon him a morally unhealthful environment and levelled a continuous and deadly propaganda against his self-respect.

⁸¹"Strivings of the Negro Race," Atlantic Monthly, LXXX (1897), 197.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY AND NEGRO INFERIORITY

Southerners looked to history, as well as to biology, for evidence to be used against the Negro. Upon the character of each race history was grounded. God, it seemed to many, had made Negroes to be servants of white men. This original "fact" was of fundamental importance in the whole history of Negro-white relations. Other white supremacists, influenced by the theory of evolution, especially by the concept of social evolution, conceived of racial distinction as the product of natural and divine forces operating over vast eras. In whichever light the Southerner viewed the history of the races, he concluded that Negroes were inferior. Either Negroes could never hope to attain equality, or they could at best do so only after eons of development.

* * *

The Southerner was never completely at home in citing Cartwright, Nott, and Darwin. Science did not represent high enough authority. Thoroughly grounded in the religious argument in support of slavery, and generally fundamentalist in religious belief, he was uncomfortable unless he could find divine support for his arguments. Behind the "voice of Nature" he looked for, and thought he had discovered, the will of

God. He wished to clothe the biologist and the historian in vestments, giving them the religious authority of the clergyman.

Following this tendency, the Delaware legislature resolved in 1866 that it was "the immutable laws of God" that had "affixed upon the brow of the white race the ineffaceable stamp of superiority."¹ During debate in December, 1866, on the bill to extend the suffrage to the Negroes of Washington, D. C., Senator Garrett Davis of Kentucky argued that "the great God who created all races never intended the negro, the lowest," to have equal power with the highest, the white race. Davis welcomed European immigrants to the "national family," but Indians, Mongolians, Chinese, and Tartars "ought not and can not safely be admitted to the powers and privileges of citizenship."²

If the races "were made different by Omnipotence for some wise and inscrutable purpose," then antagonism toward any pretensions on the part of the colored man rose "to the

¹Cited in E. M. Coulter, The South During Reconstruction, 1865-1877 (Baton Rouge, 1947), 363.

²Cited in "Monthly Record of Events," Harper's Magazine, XXXIV (1867), 398. Two years earlier, in January, 1864, Davis had endeavored to persuade the Senate to include in the proposed Thirteenth Amendment a provision which would have barred Negroes from office under the United States Government. See James G. Blaine, Twenty Years in Congress, 2 vols. (Norwich, Conn., 1884), I, 505.

dignity of the highest principle and virtue." It was an "instinct of manhood, the elevation of the soul, the pride and dignity of race which God Almighty has implanted in the breast of every reasonable creature."³ The Southerner had no shame to hide; rather, he ought to proclaim his virtue from the housetop.

Propagandists, often ecstatic in recounting the character and achievements of the white race, held that the same Providence that predestined the white race to power, wealth, and self government "withheld from the African the capacities and aspirations which He bestowed upon the white man" being born "under a cloud that has never lifted" and showed no rift.⁴

The Negro was believed to be incapable of independent civilized existence. In the economy of creation, he was a dependent by necessity of intellectual and moral weakness, valuable as a laborer, but a "dangerous tool in the contests of politics."⁵ Because "the law of nature, which is always

³Carrollton West Alabamian, March 9, 1870.

⁴"The Best Government the World Even Saw," Southern Review, reprinted in Carrollton West Alabamian, ibid., August 26, 1874; see also "The Latin Races in America," Southern Review, IX (1871), 324-332.

⁵Puryear, The Public School in Its Relation to the Negro, 7.

the law of God" had determined it, Negroes must work as "bootblacks and scavengers, cooks and chamber-maids, farm hands," and as menials of whatever sort until "chaos comes again."⁶

Of course, the Negro was not to blame, and any attempt to change him into what he could not be was equivalent to an attempt to change arteries, nerves, or bones. In conformity with this view, Senator John T. Morgan of Alabama asserted that race aversion rested upon "ordinances that human power can neither enact nor amend nor repeal."⁷ Arguing from the same premise, Senator James B. Eustis of Louisiana announced that he stood helpless to aid the Negro because nature and God forbade him to. "The Negro," he apologized, "would have the right to appeal to the enlightened judgment and to the sense of justice of the American people to protect him against the unfeeling arrogance and relentless proscription which has so long endured" were it not that the natural outcome of the unequal relations between the races had been "fixed and regulated" by natural or divine law.⁸ A leading Mississippian, Ethelbert Barksdale, was less apologetic in defending "unfeeling arrogance" among white people. After the redemption of Mississippi, Barksdale observed, no more "profane" attempts

⁶Ibid., 9.

⁷"Shall Negro Majorities Rule?" Forum, VI (1888), 588.

⁸"Race Antagonism in the South," Forum, VI (1888), 147.

were made "to annul the distinctions which Infinite Wisdom" had established between the Caucasian and the Negro.⁹

Others agreed with Barksdale in lauding the "Southern Anglo-Saxon" for having "too much reverence to attempt . . . improvement upon the Creator's handiwork."¹⁰

* * *

Historical evidence subsequent to the creation of the races was assiduously offered to the public as proof that Negroes had been and were slavish. The historical and biological arguments complemented one another, but the historical argument was not only the more respectable but also the more plausible, for objective evidence of the backwardness of Negro societies certainly existed. Not even a New England "fanatic" could deny that Europe was more advanced than Africa, and few would analyze carefully the reasons why; it would ordinarily be enough to assert that the Negro himself was at fault.

The Southerner insisted that slavery, however bad it may have been for the white man, had offered nothing but good to the Negroes. Slavery taught absolute savages to be skilled laborers in agriculture, in domestic arts, and, to some extent, in mechanical arts. Slavery was "a School of Association

⁹"Reconstruction in Mississippi," in Hilary Herbert, ed., Why the Solid South (Baltimore, 1890), 343.

¹⁰W. Y. Atkinson, "The Atlanta Exposition," North American Review, CLXI (1895), 393.

that raised the race to a higher plane of life than it has ever reached in any other age or in any other quarter of the globe."¹¹ History could be studied in vain for any evidence that the Negro could achieve as much by his own efforts as he had under slavery and under the continued instruction of the whites since emancipation. Slavery was not the cause of Negro inferiority, but the result; the only advances the Negro ever made had occurred in a state of slavery or quasi-slavery.¹²

Where the Negro had progressed it had invariably been under the influence of a stronger race. This influence and domination lacking, the Negro inevitably reverted to the original type. Since the dawn of history, the racist historian argued, the Negro had been elevated by his superiors in Egypt, in Palestine, in Phoenicia, in Rome, in the Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, and English empires, and in the South. Presented with every opportunity to climb in the scale of civilization, he had never done so, except artificially under forced draft, because he could not.¹³ History, said the

¹¹Puryear, The Public School in Its Relation to the Negro, 6.

¹²Thomas Nelson Page, "A Southerner on the Negro Question," North American Review, CLIV (1892), 403.

¹³Ibid., 401-413; Walter Hines Page, "The Last Hold of the Southern Bully," Forum, XVI (1893), 311; New Orleans Picayune, September 22, 1898. Paul B. Barringer, "The Negro and the Social Order," Race Problems of the South, 183.

white supremacist, demonstrated beyond the shadow of a doubt that the Negro was inferior.

* * *

In boasting that the American Negro was more advanced than the native African, the South necessarily admitted the possibility that the black race might develop increasing capacity for civilization. If it did, however, it must still remain thousands of years behind in the upward climb. In the ancient world the distinction between master and bondsman, even when both were of the same color, had resulted in mutual estrangement for 4,000 years.¹⁴ In the United States the social repugnance between the free-born and free-made classes had been intensified by the fact that the bondsman was not only a slave but also a member of a different and inferior race.¹⁵ Four times 4,000 years might well be required before free blacks could hope to reach the level of their former white masters. Nor was it possible to accelerate their movement significantly.¹⁶ The white child inherited qualities implanted in the race during untold centuries of struggle

¹⁴W. H. Ruffner, "Co-education of the White and Colored Races," Scribner's Monthly, VIII (1874), 86-87.

¹⁵Ibid., 87.

¹⁶Southern Review, VI (1869), 100; Carrollton West Alabamian, June 1, 1870.

toward the light of Caucasian civilization, and it was necessary for the Negro race to duplicate the experiences of the superior race before the Negro infant could come into the world on equal terms. White men felt, of course, that when the Negro had attained the heights the whites then possessed, the Caucasian would have ascended even more empyrean peaks of civilization.

Lord Bryce, frequently quoted by Southerners, and influenced by them as well as by his English background, proclaimed that history was a record of progress in civilization of originally barbarous people, of extremely slow improvement, with nothing abrupt, but rather a process of tentative development. History marked the growth and enlargement of the mind "resulting in and being accompanied by a gradual improvement of political institutions and of the arts and sciences." In the United States, Bryce wrote, there was juxtaposition of the most primitive and the most advanced, the most rudimentary and the most complex types of culture. Savages had been violently carried across the sea and put to work by masters who were "three or four thousand years in advance of them in mental capacity and moral force." Though improvement had taken place under slavery, the great body of Negroes had remained "in their notions and their habits much what their ancestors were in the forests of the Niger or the Congo."

Suddenly, they were not only freed but also made "active members of the most popular government the world has ever seen," and treated as fit to share in ruling not themselves only, but also their recent masters. Privileges which the rural "laborers of England did not obtain until 1885 were in 1867 thrust upon these children of nature, whose biggest form of pleasure had hitherto been to caper to the strains of a banjo."¹⁷

* * *

It was quite easy to assess the Negro's inherited aptitude for civilized affairs, the Southerner imagined, inasmuch as he had had, since the beginning of time, a country all his own to develop. The same animals which were in Africa at the dawn of creation were still there in greater abundance than ever. The same people were there, unable now as then to master the natural environment and develop the arts of civilization,

the same black, glossy, low-browed, wolly-headed, mighty-lipped, long-heeled natives who now possess its fertile plains, resemble their forefathers who sat down by the Nile and the Niger thousands of years ago, in their morals, social customs, laws, and business habits,

¹⁷American Commonwealth, 2 vols. (rev. ed., 1910), II, 515-517. Other foreign observers of the American scene similarly were vulnerable to propaganda on the Negro. See, for example, Abbe Felix Klein, In the Land of the Strenuous Life (Chicago, 1905), 296-297.

as precisely as they resemble them in penetrating fragrance and personal comeliness.¹⁸

The King of Dahomey was said to be a tyrant loved for his tyranny, with three to four thousand wives and a "reversionary interest in all other females in the kingdom."¹⁹ His subjects were "cowardly, cruel and bloodthirsty, noisy and self-conceited, and given to lying, cheating and drunkenness."²⁰ African villages were sinkholes of barbarism.²¹ The latest fashions were amusing: "How the People of All Classes Dress and Don't Dress There."²² The history of Africa was a static round of barbaric men succeeding barbaric men, doing what barbaric men always did because there was not a spark of innovation in their nature.

The Negro's apologists could offer no excuse that time was lacking. Africa was ancient when England had been a waste.²³ If it were claimed that the African environment was not conducive to the growth of culture, what did the Negro do to find a more suitable home? "Sambo would have been

¹⁸"The Best Government the World Ever Saw," Southern Review, cited in Carrollton West Alabamian, August 26, 1874.

¹⁹Charleston News and Courier, May 11, 1876.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Charlottesville (Va.), Chronicle, October 4, 1878.

²²Ibid., July 26, 1878.

²³"The Best Government the World Ever Saw," Southern Review, cited in Carrollton West Alabamian, August 26, 1874.

quite contented to live and die in blessed ignorance" that the world extended beyond the particular woods in which he slept, ate, and loafed. "It was only upon an invitation that he could not refuse, at the point of the blunderbuss, and under the constraint of chains and handcuffs, that he turned up in the character of an emigrant in foreign ports." Not he, but the "brave old Pilgrim Fathers, and their pleasant posterity," who had a "natural aptitude and appetite for man stealing," were responsible for his presence in the South.²⁴

Liberia, a creature of charity and a darling of philanthropy, hardly differed from the Congo. It was nothing if not a failure.²⁵ Civilization had been created for the black man there, the country founded for him by the Caucasian; "Christendom had given its assistance and its prayers." Yet there were no factories in Liberia, "no boats, no beasts of burden, no carts; there is no money there. Altogether it presents a hopeless picture."²⁶

Indeed, the Negroes had neglected Africa long enough; it was time for the European to seize that dark continent and to employ it in the uses of civilization. The Southerner

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Hilary Herbert, "Reconstruction in Alabama," Why the Solid South, 37.

²⁶Page, "The Southerner on the Negro Question," North American Review, CLIV (1892), 405.

asserted that the partition of Africa by Europeans could hardly be ascribed solely to a lust for territory. The energetic races realized that the tropical countries, with their valuable resources, could not be left to the colored race. The "overmastering hand" of a superior race was required. Progress came only from the "energy, thrift, discipline, social and political efficiency of peoples whose power is not the result of varying circumstances."²⁷

Unlike the whites who had brought Negroes to America, perhaps a few stout Caucasians should go to Africa to rule the blacks in their native haunts, especially since valuable resources could be developed by native labor. The imperialism of the closing decades of the nineteenth century was advantageous to Southern white men in their efforts to rule the Negro. The argument that the incapacity of primitives was demonstrated by history received the endorsement of millions of Caucasians at home and abroad, North as well as South. Did not William McKinley, President of the United States and leader of "the party of emancipation," call for the annexation of the Philippines in order to Christianize and civilize the American's little brown brother there?

²⁷J. L. M. Curry, Difficulties, Complications, Limitations, Connected with the Education of the Negro (Baltimore, 1895), 14.

In the history of Haiti and other Caribbean islands the racist historian discovered abundant material seeming to support his belief that civilization declined wherever Negro slaves gained freedom and dominance. As slaves the Negroes of Haiti had, he argued, contributed by their labor to the welfare of mankind. Upon gaining freedom they began sliding into barbarism. Here was the old story of Negro government.²⁸ Degeneration prevailed in Haiti, in St. Domingo, in Venezuela, and in all other countries where blacks enjoyed greater political power than whites, or where a few knavish whites used the blacks to ride into office.²⁹ When the influence and authority of the superior race was banished, Negroes reverted to paganism and cannibalism and lived in unbroken desolation. In Haiti perhaps 100,000 nominal Christians remained among 500,000 pagans.³⁰

The New Orleans Crescent immediately after the Civil War in condemning misguided zealots who wanted to make the Negro "a voter, a magistrate, a judge, in short a white man" pointed to recent Jamaican history as showing that, although it was not impossible to make the Negro useful to society

²⁸New Orleans Crescent, December 9, 1865; Charleston News and Courier, July 21, 1868.

²⁹Carrollton West Alabamian, September 18, 1872.

³⁰Ibid., May 7, 1873.

according to his capacity, it was as impossible to turn the African into a European as it was to make the leopard change his spots.³¹

A generation later Thomas Nelson Page wrote: "For nearly a hundred years the negro has been masquerading in governing Hayti, and a more fantastic mumery never degraded a land." Under black rule "San Domingo, once the queen of the Antilles, has sunk into a state of almost primeval barbarism."³² Revolution succeeded revolution; massacre succeeded massacre. A country once wealthy was in ruin. Christianity was giving way to "voodoo worship." "Such a riot of folly and extravagance . . . was never witnessed save in those countries" in which the Negro himself furnished the illustration.³³

* * *

In religion the Negro after the Civil War enjoyed greater freedom than in other part of his affairs. White Southerners were not long in concluding that the creation of Negro churches produced a lamentable spiritual decline and offered further proof that the ex-slave was unworthy of

³¹December 21, 1865.

³²"The Southerner on the Negro Question," North American Review, CLIV (1892), 405.

³³Ibid., 406. See also G. O. Seilhamer, "Negro Life in Jamaica," Harper's Magazine, XLIV (1872), 553-561.

independence. Whether or not there was such a decline, there can be no doubt that white observers were tempted to exaggerate the situation.

Under the "watch-care and instruction of the whites," the slaves had been "devout, sober and consistent Christians," but, upon becoming self-directed, freedmen surrendered to their excitable natures and took the road to wild extravagance, and in some cases reverted to heathenism.³⁴ Ethics was divorced from theology and thieves and adulterers went uncensured in the congregation or pulpit. The Southerner "felt gratitude arise" in his heart that he was not responsible.³⁵

This tendency to lapse had been checked by the strong control of the whites, but under freedom it seemed that nothing could be done to restrain the blacks from rushing into paganism. One commentator spoke of a mass of sable humanity weltering in confusion and anarchy, every particle possessing "a soul imbued with superstition, woven into its grain as it were, never to be eradicated."³⁶ Heathen ceremonies

³⁴Noah K. Davis, "The Negro in the South," Forum, I (1886), 130; Rev. Robert F. Campbell, Some Aspects of the Race Problem in the South (Asheville, N. C., 1899), 23.

³⁵Chevereux Gris, "The Negro in His Religious Aspect," Southern Magazine, XVII (1875), 501-502.

³⁶Ibid., 498-499; see also Sunny South, March 15, 1890.

were allegedly revived in localities of sparse white population, among them certain districts of that "blackened, desolated spot, once the proud state of South Carolina. . . ." ³⁷

A Congressman who wrote a piece on the advancing heathenism among Negroes in Liberty County, Georgia, claimed that it was refused publication in Northern papers "on the ground that the Northern people would not believe it, and that it was based upon the prejudices of the white race in the South." ³⁸

Other accounts were not refused, however. In the pages of the Century Magazine Bishop T. U. Dudley reached a Northern audience with the assertion that the Negroes' "religion is a superstition, their sacraments are fetiches, their worship is a wild frenzy, and their morality a shame." ³⁹ The remedy according to Bishop Dudley was a resumption of white control and instruction, regardless of the objections of some black ranters. ⁴⁰

* * *

³⁷Gris, "The Negro in His Religious Aspect," Southern Magazine, XVII (1875), 501; see also Sunny South, September 28, 1889.

³⁸Norwood, Address on the Negro, 12.

³⁹Bishop T. U. Dudley, "How Shall We Help the Negro?" Century Magazine, VIII (1885), 279.

⁴⁰Ibid., 280. See also Rev. D. Clay Lilly, "The Negro in Relation to Religion," Race Problems of the South, 119-121.

Southerners had predicted that free Negroes would not work nor be able to care for themselves, would resort to robbing for a living, and would gradually diminish in numbers, finally becoming extinct. At the end of the nineteenth century no Southerner was so blind as to believe the Negro extinct, but it was still argued that practically every other prediction had come true in greater or less degree, and that the Negroes must be protected and ruled by their white friends or they might yet die out.⁴¹ Reconstruction had ruined the blacks, it was believed, although redemption had come just in time to save them from themselves and from Yankee politicians and social uplifters.

In 1901 George T. Winston reviewed what most Southerners claimed had happened to the inferior race in the South.⁴² This college president explained that following the abolition of slavery a great change involving personal interest, moral influence, and social and economic relations had taken place. There was practically no social contact between the races, except that which involved the Negroes and degraded whites. During slavery the two races had mingled, not as social equals, but in constant social relations. On every plantation the

⁴¹Barringer, "The Negro and the Social Order," Race Problems of the South, 178-194.

⁴²"The Relation of the Whites to the Negroes," in America's Race Problems: Addresses at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Philadelphia, April Twelfth and Thirteenth, MCMI (Philadelphia, 1901), 105-118.

white and black children played together. It was a privilege for the white child to visit the slave cabins and listen to a real "Uncle Remus" delight him with the stories later immortalized by Joel Chandler Harris. Social intercourse had involved adults, too. Negro women came to the "Big House" to inspect the children, to direct work, and to show their interest in the slaves. It was this influence of the white race which had gradually transformed the savage into a civilized individual.

Upon emancipation the Negro had reverted to the idleness made possible by a "mild climate and fertile soil, the abundance of game in forest and stream, the bountiful supply of wild fruits. . . ." As a consequence, the average Negro idled away half his time and yet lived "in tolerable comfort." The national government had strengthened the temptation to laziness by distributing food and clothing to freedmen. In this way a vast and effective labor force was corrupted and became a miserable object of charity. During the dark night of Radical Reconstruction carpet-baggers and educational and religious visionaries invaded the South preaching social and political equality, destroying the friendship between the races, and giving the Negro "a consciousness of being unharnessed, unhitched, unbridled and unrestrained. The wildest excesses followed."

This destructive revolution ended when the South won its fight for civilization, but the Negroes were left with a burden of ignorance, incompetence, and criminality and with "dark and gloomy" prospects for the future. Their only hope was to continue under the instruction and control of the whites, and remain there until the race problem should be finally solved.

The South had once loved Negroes, and would again if "they but deserve it." Two things were requisite: "1. The withdrawal of the negro from politics. 2. His increased efficiency as a laborer." The only alternative was for him to remain a "dull and stupid draught animal," finally to vanish from history.

Winston's discussion of the dependence of the Negro upon the benevolent white Southerner represented a distillation of the thoughts of the South on the "Negro question." It was in substance an adaptation of the pro-slavery argument of the old South to the conditions of quasi-slavery of the new South. Not an original thought was advanced by Winston,⁴³

⁴³Winston's ideas can be found in greater or less degree in nearly any item of white supremacy propaganda. The Southern Review, for example, spoke of Negroes as children who could prosper only under the "pupilage, control, guidance" of the whites, otherwise they were exposed to "want, idleness, and crime." "Congress versus the Constitution," IV (1868), 86. The Atlanta Constitution, March 4, 1877, stated that the emancipated slave, after a fling, was "sauntering toward the mansion" but he met a "tramp with a carpetbag on

and the history he presented was remarkably deceptive. Indeed, the South did not welcome original thought on the "Negro problem," and did not shrink from deception. It intended to keep the Negro in subjection, and its leading spokesmen acknowledged as much, often in a fashion seductive enough to win a hearing among Yankees anxious to be deceived.

his shoulder," who turned him away from the old master; now finding sickness and death along the Radical road, he was coming back to his Southern master's home.

CHAPTER III

AMALGAMATION

Amalgamation of the races was a fundamental worry in the South. A great deal of theorizing on other aspects of the "Negro question" stemmed from this basic fear. Given the belief that the master race ruled the servant race in justice, because of its God-given superiority, anything which tended to destroy the distinction between the sheep and the goats was regarded as unholy, as unclean. Inter-marriage between the races would tend to obliterate racial characteristics distinguishing master from servant. The danger that this distinction would be lost lay at the root of the horrifying associations called into the consciousness by the prospect of racial amalgamation. How long could white men despise black in-laws, nephews and nieces, cousins, or spouses? How long under these circumstances could master and servant be distinguished at a glance?

It is not surprising, therefore, that the moment unacceptable suggestions were offered to solve the Negro problem the Southerner quickly raised the specter of social equality, resulting in amalgamation. "The next thing you know," he would say, "the Negroes will be eating and sleeping with us." He knew that if white and colored people

went to school together, worked in the same factories, sat in the same legislature--all on terms of equality--then it would no longer be possible to forestall amalgamation on the grounds that Negroes were not worthy to marry whites.

* * *

This was the reason the whites of Alabama were shocked at the work of the "mongrel" Constitutional Convention of 1867 which authorized mixed schools and refused to prohibit racial intermarriage.¹ The whites of Arkansas similarly complained that their radical constitution of 1868 would lead to amalgamation.²

By their Civil Rights Bill of 1874, or "Social Equality Bill," Congressional Radicals proposed "to chain the mind and poison the morals of the South and to leave the body alive that it may transmit to future times a leprous distilment of corrupted blood."³ Such proposals encouraged rape. Thus a report circulated in the fall of 1875, in the style of ante-bellum concern about slave insurrections, that Negro militiamen in Washington County, Georgia, had planned an insurrection during which they would kill all the white men and

¹Herbert, "Reconstruction in Alabama," in Why the Solid South, 46.

²Fort Smith Herald, February 22, 1868.

³Montgomery Advertiser, quoted in Carrollton West Alabamian, June 10, 1874.

ugly women and take the pretty white women for themselves.⁴

A main attraction of the white man's party organized during Radical Reconstruction was the promise to protect the "poor white man's family" from the corruption fostered by amalgamationists.⁵ When white supremacy was reestablished, the Southern states enacted legislation to prohibit interracial marriages. The Hanover County Court in Virginia in 1879 sentenced a Negro, Edward Kenny, and his white spouse to five years in prison for the crime of intermarriage, which had been changed from a misdemeanor to a felony the year before. The United States Circuit Court of Richmond upheld the conviction, stating that the law applied equally to white and black, without distinction on the basis of "race, color, or previous condition." Although Negroes protested,⁶ whites believed that the wisdom of the law was "sustained by the experience of the world and the teachings of science."⁷ A Southern judge, thinking the punishment should fit the

⁴Carrollton West Alabamian, September 1, 1875.

⁵Carrollton West Alabamian, February 9, 1870.

⁶The Sunny South, March 6, 1886, in a discussion of this case brushed aside constitutional questions and took the high ground that race pollution was a crime which legislation should define as such.

⁷Charlottesville (Va.) Chronicle, May 2, 1879.

crime, advocated the death sentence for the Negro, and life imprisonment for the white, in cases of miscegenation.⁸

The white Southerner convinced himself that miscegenation was unchristian. An Arkansas editor denounced the "hybrids" who "misrepresented" Arkansas in 1868, declaring that the "laws of God are immutable," and that "Providence has unerringly marked out the position which black men shall occupy."⁹ A quarter-century later, a Mississippian, reviewing the evils of Reconstruction, similarly clothed the South in righteousness while denouncing the "wicked defiance of the law of Almighty God to divide human beings into distinct races, and the institution of the beastly system of mongrelism usually called social equality."¹⁰ The vigilance, force, and courage of the white race in Mississippi prevented a repetition there of the histories of Haiti and Santo Domingo.¹¹

To prevent amalgamation the Creator had, it was said, implanted in all races an instinct of aversion which tended to maintain the races in pristine purity. Only the worst

⁸Norwood, Address on the Negro, 25-28. The editor of the Charlottesville (Va.) Chronicle, May 2, 1879, however, while denouncing the crime, asked for executive clemency for the "degraded pair" if they would move far away, because gross unions of this sort outside matrimony were defined as misdemeanors.

⁹Fort Smith Herald, May 2, 1868.

¹⁰Barksdale, "Reconstruction in Mississippi," in Why the Solid South, 330.

¹¹Ibid., 349.

members of each race were unresponsive to this instinct. The Chancellor of the University of Georgia expressed the utmost confidence that the best people, on the other hand, conformed to the instinct of racial antipathy and shuddered when confronted with the prospect of racial mixing.

It has been plausibly suggested that the intermingling will begin along the line of the highest development of the black and the lowest of the white; but this is opposed by two facts. (1) The sporadic cases of miscegenation have occurred among the lowest types of both races. (2) The highest developments of the negro type scorn such intermarriage with whites as is possible to them.¹²

The North Carolina leader, Zebulon Vance, believed that race aversion among the best people was stronger in 1884 than it had been in 1865. Intermarriage was "regarded with so much disgust that when you find a white man or woman ready to marry a negro, you may be sure the negro will get the worst of the bargain."¹³

Joel Chandler Harris, less inclined to insult the best people among the Negroes, called upon them as witnesses in behalf of race purity. Harris claimed that aversion to intermarriage was as strong in one race as in the other, a fact demonstrated by the harsh criticism the "most intelligent negroes" levelled at Frederick Douglass for marrying

¹²Walter B. Hill, "Uncle Tom without a Cabin," Century Magazine, V (1883-1884), 862.

¹³"The Future of the Negro," North American Review, CXXXIX (1884), 86.

a white woman.¹⁴ Harris's view was supported by A. G. Haygood, a leading Southern Methodist clergyman, who commended Negroes for not desiring to mingle their blood with that of the whites.¹⁵

A Virginian asserted that the animus of the entire machinery of the Federal government during Reconstruction had been the intention to "wear off race antagonism" by promiscuous contact, to pave the way to amalgamation, and thus to degrade into mulattoes "the noblest type of the noblest race that ever floated on the tide of time." If the South were saved, it would be only because of the antagonisms and antipathies "implanted in us by our Maker to protect purity of blood" But law might weaken instinct, "so that a time may come when, both from the increasing strength of the law and the growing weakness of human virtue, our race may be hopelessly ruined." As the only safe philosophy was found in the prayer of "Our Savior, 'Lead us not into temptation,'" Virginians must overthrow public school education for Negroes, which offered constant temptation to commit the crime of

¹⁴"The Future of the Negro," in ibid., 87.

¹⁵"Introduction," in J. M. Hood, Negro in the Christian Pulpit; or The Two Characters and Two Destinies as Delineated in Twenty-one Practical Sermons (Raleigh, N. C., 1884), 5-6.

amalgamation "against decency and morals, against race and blood, against God and nature."¹⁶

An officer of the Freedmen's Bureau, John W. De Forest, noting that only a few widowed "low down wimmen" took Negro lovers, confirmed the observation of Governor Vance that miscegenation had declined under freedom. His explanation had nothing to do with instinct, however, but was based upon the conditions of increased segregation and heightened propaganda. Where "the prejudice of race has been cultivated by every possible appeal, only the extremest degradation could lead a white woman to listen to overtures of love from a 'nigger.'"¹⁷ Amalgamation lay so far in the future that it could be discounted for the present.¹⁸

A generation later Lord Bryce also reported that whites were drawing away from the blacks: "Presently the mixture of blood diminished, a mixture which may have been doing something for the blacks in leavening their mass . . . with persons of superior capacity and talent."¹⁹ The more

¹⁶Puryear, The Public School In Its Relation to the Negro, 14-15.

¹⁷A Union Officer in the Reconstruction, 138.

¹⁸Ibid., 132.

¹⁹Bryce, American Commonwealth, II, 517.

thoroughgoing segregation of the New South, necessitated by the semi-freedom of the blacks, was chiefly responsible for this slow-down in amalgamation, a process which had been going on in a subterranean way as long as Negroes had lived among whites.

Some Negroes and Yankees suggested that amalgamation would eventuate in nothing worse than the blending of Caucasian and Negroid physical traits. This prediction was in itself shocking enough to the white Southerner, who was fond of contrasting the Negro's ugliness with his own beauty. But he believed that far more than esthetics was involved. Amalgamation would darken the future of the South, determined as it would be by a population low in intelligence, lacking in capacity for self-government, and weak in all other qualities associated with Caucasian virtue. The future would contain no hope, because the debased population, no longer able to sustain growth in civilization, would falter, and then go into decline until it reached the mid-point between civilization and savagery, if indeed it could stop short of brutish chaos.

Plentiful illustrations were offered to prove this point. Albert T. Bledsoe, for example, read the ills of Mexico, and of the whole of Latin America, in terms of mongrelism. Spanish blood had been polluted by the Indian,

therefore Mexico was condemned to bloodshed and strife. Pseudo-philanthropists and visionaries ignored these evil consequences of undermining the "Darwinian struggle for existence."²⁰ Charles A. Gardiner searched out further evidence of the unfortunate consequences of modern amalgamation:

The Griquas of South Africa, hybrids of Dutch colonists and Hottentots; the Kruglis of Western Africa, of Turkish-Moorish descent; the Zambos of western South America, mongrels of mixed European, negro, and indigenous American races; the Portuguese-Malay half-castes of the East Indies; the English-Maori half-breeds of New Zealand; the Dutch-Malay half-breeds of Java; the Mongolian and Slavic mixture of Russian Asia; the Portuguese and negro population of Brazil; and the Mestizos of Mexico; are all examples of modern race fusion, but without an exception they disclose results adverse to miscegenation. In no instance does the mixed people show the mental vigor of the Caucasian parent stock, and in most instances the mental and moral condition of the half-caste is lower even than that of the inferior stock.²¹

The mulatto, as defined by the white, was the best argument against racial intermarriage. Although Southerners,

²⁰Editorial, "The Latin Races in America," Southern Review, IX (1871), 322-324. Spaniards themselves entertained this fear of racial debasement, though with less tenacity than Southerners. See Lewis Hanke, Aristotle and the American Indians: A Study in Race Prejudice in the Modern World (Chicago, 1959); Donald Pierson, Negroes in Brazil: A Study of Race Contact at Bahia (Chicago, 1942), who deemphasizes race prejudice in Brazil but acknowledges its existence; and Stanley J. Stein, Vasouras: A Brazilian County, 1850-1900 (Cambridge, Mass., 1957).

²¹"Future of the Negro," North American Review, CXXXIX (1884), 80.

in order to stress the inferiority of the black race, were quick to point out that intelligent Negroes were mulattoes, they also consigned the mulatto to relative inferiority in order to encourage the white race to maintain its superiority. The real difficulty about mulattoes was that they were deemed more intelligent than blacks, more dissatisfied with menial labor, and more difficult to manage, in addition to the unpleasant fact that they were kinfolk who had been abandoned to degradation.

The mulatto, according to this view, was "peculiarly inflammable material." From the white he inherited "a refinement unfitting him for all work which has not a certain delicacy about it"; from the black, a moral laxity, "unquestionably a negro characteristic."²² There might be hope for the pure black, but there could be none for the mulatto, who were hybrids "at once short-lived and unfruitful, which, if the stock were not kept up, would soon pass away."²³ It was a common belief that the "hybrid" was physically weaker, more susceptible to disease, and shorter-lived than either of its progenitors.²⁴ As segregation tightened and amalgamation declined, the South hopefully anticipated a time when the mulatto breed would be extinct.

²²N. S. Shaler, "An Ex-Southerner in South Carolina," Atlantic Monthly, XXVI (1870), 57.

²³Ibid., 57.

²⁴R. Randolph Stevenson, M. D., The Southern Side; or, Andersonville Prison (Baltimore, 1876), 292.

Some whites believed that white blood was so potent that the slightest degree lifted the mulatto above the pure Negro;²⁵ others thought that a quarter-white was inferior in intelligence to the full-blooded Negro;²⁶ but most agreed that the mulatto, because of his kinship to the master race, aspired to equality with whites and, in consequence, stirred up the Negro, who otherwise was prevented by instinct from hoping for the unattainable.²⁷ But it would be a mistake to admit mulattoes, let alone the blacks, to equality with the white race, because the structure of civilization erected by Anglo-Saxons could be maintained by no lesser people. Thus W. P. Trent declared that white Southerners were burdened by "perpetual contact with a free alien race, to whom they are theoretically bound to allow legal and political rights, but to whom they cannot allow social rights without the risk of disintegrating their own civilization."²⁸

²⁵Gayarre, "The Southern Question," North American Review, CXXV (1877), 490.

²⁶Charles A. Gardiner, "Future of the Negro," North American Review, CXXXIX (1884), 80.

²⁷Shaler, "An Ex-Southerner in South Carolina," Atlantic Monthly, XXVI (1870), 57; H. H. Goodloe, "The Negro Problem," Southern Magazine, XIV (1874), 373-376; Gayarre, "The Southern Question," North American Review, CXXV (1877), 490.

²⁸"Dominant Forces in Southern Life," Atlantic Monthly, LXXXIX (1897), 48.

It is not surprising that the South took elaborate precautions against what it believed to be imminent destruction. Segregation of the races was designed to prevent amalgamation. So was an astonishingly complex "etiquette" that governed the behavior of individuals of the two races when necessity brought them into contact. Most carefully regulated was the contact between Negro males and white females. It is significant that segregation on the railways began with the setting aside of a "ladies' car" to which white men were admitted, although Negro women as well as men were excluded. Railways which permitted "filthy negroes," "foul vermin," to enter Pullman cars occupied by whites, especially by white ladies, encountered public hostility.²⁹

In analyzing the "rape complex" W. J. Cash has pointed out that the Southern woman was identified with the very notion of the South, and that an assault on the South would be an assault on her.³⁰ There is no doubt that Southerners thought the rape of a white woman by a Negro the most horrible of crimes, justifying the most brutal punishment imaginable.

²⁹Carrollton West Alabamian, April 7, 1875. Grady, "In Plain Black and White: A Reply to Mr. Cable," Century Magazine, XXIX (1885), 909-917.

³⁰The Mind of the South (New York, 1941), 126.

In dramatic fashion such rape challenged the mastery of the whites. If control broke down in this instance, all controls would collapse. Rape represented the failure of the white man to defend his race against the most threatening insubordination. Moreover, as in a flash of lightning, it represented the obliteration of physical distinction, the ultimate basis for subordination of the Negro. Refinement, civilization, virtue, were challenged by brutishness, savagery, vice. All society trembled, as it always does when confronted by vicious crime, especially by rape or murder. In this case, however, the possible collapse of the social order was more sharply revealed because this particular crime represented in the Southern mind not only the depravity of the Negro race but a fundamental challenge to white supremacy.³¹

A Southern college president expressed the collective fear and described the convulsive reaction of the white community in defense of its women, and of its honor and integrity:

The Southern woman with her helpless little children in solitary farm house no longer sleeps secure in the absence of her husband with doors unlocked but safely guarded by black men whose lives would be freely given in her defense. But now, when a knock is heard at the door, she shudders with nameless horror. The black brute is lurking in the dark, a monstrous beast, crazed with lust. His ferocity is almost demoniacal. A mad bull or a tiger could scarcely be more brutal. A whole

³¹Alexander C. King, "Lynching as a Penalty," in Race Problems of the South, 161-163.

community is now frenzied with horror, with blind and furious rage for vengeance. A stake is driven; the wretched brute, covered with oil, bruised and gashed, beaten and hacked and maimed, amid the jeers and shouts and curses, the tears and anger and joy, the prayers and the maledictions of thousands of civilized people, in the sight of the school-houses, court-houses and churches is burned to death.

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I do not hesitate to say that more horrible crimes have been committed by the generation of Negroes that have grown up in the South since slavery than by the six preceding generations in slavery. And also that the worst cruelties of slavery all combined for two centuries were not equal to the savage barbarities inflicted in retaliation upon the Negroes by the whites during the last twenty years.³²

The rape of Negro women, because it proved the continued mastery of the white, though it foreshadowed obliteration of the color line, was deplored, but it did not result in mob destruction of the criminal. No doubt the fact that the white man could refuse to recognize his mulatto child and abandon it to the Negro community, while the white mother was bound to her child, helps explain this difference. In addition the white man was given generalized authority over Negro women as well as men, while the Negro father of the mulatto child was of the subordinate group.³³

³²George T. Winston, "The Relation of the Whites to the Negroes," in Americas' Race Problems, 108-109.

³³John Dollard asserts that white men, by virtue of membership in the dominant race, had sexual access to Negro women. Caste and Class in a Southern Town (3d ed., New York, 1937, 1957), 134-139.

The opponent of amalgamation was extraordinarily vigilant, lest the thing get started. The Protestant Episcopal Diocesan Convention, Columbia, South Carolina, in May, 1876, denied the request of the Negro parish of St. Mark's to admit its delegates, on the grounds that to give any encouragement to mulattoes would be to promote amalgamation of the races.³⁴ A majority of lay delegates rejected the appeal of the bishop and a majority of the clergy to save the Church from endorsing caste, and heeded the report of a committee which noted that before the war mulatto women "sometimes held relations with white men, which they seemed to consider and respect as very much like, if not truly, marriage. The results of such associations are numerous in our streets." It was this class which tempted to miscegenation, the committee continued, and "if miscegenation should be encouraged amongst us, then this class should be cherished and advanced." But the committee insisted that the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States was based on the "unity of race," that amalgamation was "opposed to the law of God and to civil polity," and that mulattoes could not govern church affairs well. It was better to trust laymen who lived in the world than clergymen who ran after abstract principles,

³⁴Charleston News and Courier, May 12-18, 1876.

the committee advised. The argument that mulattoes would side with whites was false; they had been classed as blacks since emancipation. Moreover, "would not immunities granted to mulattoes offer encouragement to the blacks to a mixture of races?" The committee reminded the delegates that "the agitation of the Chinese question in California shows the importance of the question of race distinctions."³⁵

Nine years later, in 1885, T. U. Dudley, Protestant Episcopal Bishop of Kentucky, eloquently presented to the readers of Century Magazine substantially the same arguments against racial intermarriage.³⁶ Remarking that the "patriot American" stood appalled before the abysmal ignorance and moral incapacity of the black race, and that the half-caste was both more debased in morals than the inferior Negro stock and less intelligent than the superior white stock, the Bishop added:

Instinct and reason, history and philosophy, science and revelation, all alike cry out against the degradation of the race by the free commingling of the tribe which is highest with that which is lowest in the scale of development. The process of selection which nature indicates as the method of most rapid progress indignantly refuses to be thus set at naught. Our temporary ills of to-day may not be remedied by the permanent wrong of the whole family in heaven and earth.³⁷

³⁵See Proceedings of the Convention, "Report of the Majority Committee," in ibid., May 13, 1876.

³⁶"How Shall We Help the Negro?" Century Magazine, VIII (1885), 273-275.

³⁷Ibid., 274-275.

CHAPTER IV

RACE WARFARE

The white Southerner argued that diverse races when brought into contact necessarily accommodate themselves to a superior-inferior relationship or engage in warfare for supremacy. As between Negro and white, biological and historical factors converged to give victory to the Caucasian race. The function of this theory of race warfare was to excuse the use of violence in reducing the freedman to a status of subservience. If the white race was destined to war against the black race until the black race had been subdued, then individual white men who employed violence to force individual black men to acknowledge servitude were not morally responsible. The responsibility belonged to the race. Moreover, since nature or nature's God ordained the laws governing race, racial warfare had natural or divine sanction. The white lynch mob in this way was transformed into a company of soldiers in a racial army whose commander-in-chief was nature or God.

According to this theory, individuals were hardly more than manifestations of a race. Southerners tended to recognize the individual only to illustrate the characteristics of the race, and then promptly to relegate him to

anonymity. On the other hand, the racist believed that every individual shared fully in the character of the race to which he belongs. Race theory transmuted the white farmer or worker into the purest and strongest of masters, while it consigned the individual Negro to the status of the humblest of servants. The Negro who was true to his race accepted subordination; the white man, on the other hand, to remain true to his race must defend its honor unto death.

Just after the Civil War a white youth spoke up for a true representative of the Negro race, Cato Allums:

He's just as civil a nigger as need be. No gentleman ever had cause to quarrel with him in no way, shape, nor manner. Wherever Cato goes; if he meets a gentleman, he off's hat and says, 'Good morning'; and if he sees a gentleman coming across the fields he puts down the bars for him. . . .¹

Cato had been conquered like the imaginary free Negro in Joel Chandler Harris's "Free Joe and the Rest of the World." Free Joe

realized the fact that though he was free he was more helpless than any slave. Having no owner every man was his master. He knew that he was the object of suspicion, and therefore all his slender resources (ah! how pitifully slender they were) were devoted to winning not kindness and appreciation, but toleration; all his efforts were in the direction of mitigating the circumstances that tended to make his condition so much worse than that of the negroes around him--negroes who had friends, because they had masters.²

¹De Forest, A Union Officer in the Reconstruction, 4.

²Century Magazine, XXIX (1884), 120.

But what if Cato and Free Joe should demand the privileges of freedom as a consequence of being freedmen?

By their very nature, it was thought, whites warred against blacks until they overcame them. In 1870 an Alabama journal stated that when the white race moved into a region exclusively occupied by the black race it assumed possession as a right of nature. If the original settlers submitted absolutely they were permitted to live in peace; if troublesome they were subdued; if permanently rebellious they were exterminated.³ "The Caucasian," this journal noted five years later, "must take the place God has assigned him."⁴

In 1877 a Virginia publicist described the Negro race as extremely docile, "a most desirable quality in a menial; a most dangerous, a fatal one in a sovereign." Who in the South, he asked, had not "witnessed day by day the most lovely exhibitions of this quality in the negro, humble, trustful and obedient?"⁵ Even the Negro, coming from the crowd, where he had been galvanized by inflammatory oratory "into a spasmodic feeling of importance, so soon as he

³Carrollton West Alabamian, May 4, 1870.

⁴Ibid., September 1, 1875.

⁵Puryear, The Public School in Its Relation to the Negro, 4.

. . . comes into contact with a white man, all his injected courage oozes out, and by his language, his attitude and bearing, he proclaims his inferiority."⁶

This same year Charles Gayarre lauded "the noble and unconquerable Caucasian race, which has been created to take gradual possession of this globe, and carry civilization around its circumference. . . ."⁷ The question of race, he said, was "the only Southern question."⁸

In 1879 General Richard Taylor, formerly a lieutenant general in the Confederacy, remarked in his memoirs:

The breed to which these whites belong has for eight centuries been the master of the earth wherever it has planted its foot. A handful conquered and holds in subjection the crowded millions of India, another and smaller bridles the fierce Caffre tribes of South Africa. Place but a score of them on the middle course of the Congo, and they will rule unless exterminated; and all the armies and all the humanitarians can not change this, until the appointed time arrives for Ham to dominate Japhet.⁹

In 1887 the Southern Bivouac congratulated Northerners on realizing ten years earlier that the white people of the South were engaged in a desperate race struggle and that "so-called outrages" were but "the efforts of the superior

⁶Ibid., 6.

⁷Gayarre, "The Southern Question," North American Review, CXXV (1877), 480.

⁸Ibid., 481.

⁹Destruction and Reconstruction (New York, 1879), 250.

race to defend and conserve society."¹⁰

Senator James B. Eustis of Louisiana declared that "incidents" in the South were only manifestations of "a struggle for supremacy and domination" between the white and black races.¹¹ In 1899 W. J. Northern, former governor of Georgia, denounced the Negro race for having caused the spilling of so much blood in the South by attempting to dominate the white race through politics. The South, he said, had not sinned, but the North had in giving the inferior race the right of suffrage.¹²

Thomas Nelson Page, inspired by the clashing of racial warfare and confident in the victory of the Caucasian race, wrote that when within a country ten millions of one race confronted another race, "the most opposite to it on earth, there must exist a question grave enough in the present and likely to become stupendous in the future."¹³

The instinct for command of the white race . . . is a wonderful thing: the serene self-confidence which reckons no opposition, but drives straight for the highest place, is impressive. It made the race in the past; it has preserved it in our time. The negroes

¹⁰Editorial, "The Negro in the South," Southern Bivouac, II (1887), 711.

¹¹"Race Antagonism in the South," Forum, VI (1888), 145.

¹²The Negro at the South (Atlanta, 1899), 15.

¹³The Negro: The Southerner's Problem, viii.

knew the courage and constancy of their masters. They have had abundant proof of them for generations, and their masters were now in arms.¹⁴

That the Negro question went "to the very foundation of race preservation" was a belief "held by the entire white population of the South as the most passionate dogma of the white race."¹⁵ The only check on the Negro, Page thought, was his "lurking recognition of the Southerner's dominant force."¹⁶

The purpose of violence was the restoration of the "old harmony" which had characterized race relations under slavery. When Negroes were misled into thinking themselves equal to their betters, a clash followed, and the Negroes suffered. As soon as Negroes accepted respectful subordination, no matter how revolutionary they had been, they were treated with good-natured tolerance by the whites.¹⁷ The good Negro was a conquered Negro: "The inferior race must submit, under forms more or less despotic, to the domination of the superior race."¹⁸

¹⁴Ibid., 24.

¹⁵Ibid., 34.

¹⁶Ibid., 49.

¹⁷Ibid., 51-55; Nashville Christian Advocate, August 4, 1892; Killebrew, "How to Deal with the Negro," Southern States Farm Magazine, V (1898), 488.

¹⁸Puryear, The Public School in Its Relation to the Negro, 12.

* * *

Every white man, it seemed, was a soldier in the Caucasian army. Thus the Ku Klux movement "was too widespread, too spontaneous, too clearly a popular movement, to be attributed to any one man or to any conspiracy of a few men."¹⁹ Moreover, the individual white man held a permanent commission to strike a sassy Negro or "nigger-lover." The private act of violence, like the act of a mob, asserted white supremacy and kept the Negro in his place, and constituted a patriotic and chivalrous deed.²⁰ Some organization was necessary, however, to support the private soldier of the white race and to guarantee either that the Negro would not strike back or that he would wish he had not.

The whole of white society gave birth occasionally to mobs which, in the South, had something of an organized, though evanescent, character; to semi-military groups possessing more definite organization such as the Ku Klux Klan, the Pale Faces and the Rifle Clubs; to the permanently organized political party; and to the most highly organized agency of society, the white man's government. White society,

¹⁹W. G. Brown, The Lower South in American History (New York, 1903), 195. At pp. 191-225 Brown offers a brilliantly written and extraordinarily naive apology for the Klan and kindred organizations.

²⁰Cash, The Mind of the South, 128-129.

or, according to another view, the Southern branch of the Caucasian race, being determined to conquer the Negro, the organizations which derived from the general community shared the same purpose. In fact, the evanescent mob, the terroristic organizations, and the Democratic party of the South all worked together to conquer the freedman. The white man's government represented the victory attained.

The Caucasian army, like all armies, had recruiters. On order of the Pale Faces, Dr. James L. Thompson delivered a speech at Lebanon, Tennessee, June 4, 1869, in which he told prospective recruits that the Anglo-Saxon race defended itself through secret brotherhoods. The master race, he said, would fight to the bitter end against the "wild fanaticism which would change the order of nature, and make the strong subservient to the weak, and place the inferior above the superior." "Pale Faces--pure white men of the Japhetic race, which alone nature's God has endowed with the capacity to attain the highest order of civilization" and "control the destinies of the world," were invited to enlist in the secret brotherhoods.²¹

And the Caucasian army had heroes. General Martin W. Gary of Edgefield, South Carolina, was one. Gary was so successful in the use of violence to win elections that he

²¹Printed in the Carrollton West Alabamian, July 13, 1870.

was known in Edgefield as the "Hero of '76." In a speech during the campaign of 1878, and in the presence of Governor Wade Hampton, Gary stated that it was a mistake to consider the "differences between the negro and the white man a difference of politics, instead [of] a difference in race." Whenever the "Caucasian united upon this issue," he said, "the negro had to go to the wall, as the Ruler of the Universe had made the white race the dominant race of all races." The Edgefield policy of violence and terror was "based upon the history of the Islands of St. Domingo, Hayti and Mauritius, upon the instincts of human nature and correct political philosophy." This "straight-out" policy would prevail in 1878 as it had in 1876. Thus the Democratic party would triumph as a result of the effectiveness of its military arm, the "Red Shirts."²² Although the greater "Hero of '76," Governor Wade Hampton, repudiated Gary's policy in a speech a month later at Greenville,²³ Hampton rode at the head of brigades of "Red Shirts" as he had two years earlier. General Gary continued unashamedly to acknowledge the military-political policy which the white people of South Carolina and of the other Southern states had adopted, disclaimers to the contrary notwithstanding.

²²Charleston News and Courier, August 15, 1878.

²³Ibid., September 20, 1878.

That anti-Negro mobs represented the general community is shown by the fact that support from neighboring districts could be counted on in case of necessity. When the local blacks showed a disposition to resist in a body or when it seemed that they might win an engagement, white reinforcements moved into the threatened area to assure victory. This happened because the whites felt that they could in no case permit their mastery of the black race to be successfully challenged. Negroes must be convinced that they inevitably faced disaster whenever they rose in "insurrection."

In September, 1868, thirty or forty men from Minden, Louisiana, went to Bossier Point to aid the local citizens quell an "insurrection."²⁴ The people of Grant Parish, in 1873, reported a citizen of Louisiana, killed seventy to eighty Negroes in the environs of Colfax in order "to preserve the peace." After the riot the old citizens reported that the Negroes were never better behaved. "A nigger in that parish puts his hat under his arm now when he talks to a white man. They are just the most respectful things you ever saw. But before the fight, oh, Lord! there was no living with them." When the report that Negroes intended to

²⁴New Orleans Picayune, September 4, 1868.

kill white men and take their wives spread into neighboring parishes, reinforcements marched in to help defeat the Negroes.²⁵ In this particular engagement the Army of North Louisiana of the Southern Department of the great Caucasian army lost only two of its members while killing seventy to eighty of the black enemy. In the "Cain Hay Massacre" in South Carolina in October, 1876, a body of whites was forced to retreat before the attack of disciplined Negroes, with the loss of several white men. When the news reached Charleston indignation hardened "every face" and 150 Charlestonians embarked on a steamer to counterattack.²⁶

In October, 1882, a Negro insurrection was reported about to take place in Alabama. According to reports, Negroes held secret meetings nightly and ominously planned an immense barbecue. Panic-stricken whites sent telegrams to Rome, Jacksonville, and other points along the railroad for support. Authorities at Anniston requested all white men to arm themselves and to stand in readiness. When the

²⁵Letter from New Orleans to the Cincinnati Commercial, printed in Carrollton West Alabamian, July 9, 1873.

²⁶Charleston Journal of Commerce, October 18, 1876. South Carolina was generally turbulent during the summer and fall of 1876 because of the military-political campaign to overthrow the Radical state government. See the Charleston Journal of Commerce and the Charleston News and Courier of these months for riots and rumors of riots. For a similar state of affairs in Louisiana see the New Orleans Picayune during these same months. The Picayune, June 3, 1876, became alarmed that the state might be depopulated of its "most useful laborers."

trouble was announced in the churches, the people rushed to their homes to prepare for the uprising. Immediately a mass meeting was held, guards were posted, and "quiet prevailed."²⁷ Sometimes in such cases women and children were evacuated to safety from the battle area.²⁸

Battles between African and Caucasian races always ended in a rout, the Southerner boasted. In the Ellenton, South Carolina, riot of September, 1876, five to six hundred whites, hunting down a band of Negroes who had fired at a group of whites, killed six Negroes with no losses to their own force. It was supposed that this trouble resulted from the lynching of an alleged rapist.²⁹ Across the South from Charleston, large crowds of armed men poured into Orange, Texas, in August, 1881, to help punish Negroes who had assaulted a white man. In the resulting fight six Negroes were killed, six to twelve wounded, and one hanged in front of Call's store, with the consequence that the Negroes were thereafter orderly.³⁰

In the war of races lynch mobs played a significant part. Near Abbeville, South Carolina, in May, 1876, a mob

²⁷Atlanta Constitution, October 18, 1882.

²⁸New Orleans Crescent, October 30, 1868.

²⁹Charleston Journal of Commerce, September 19, 1876.

³⁰Houston Post, August 20, 1881.

of 200 to 300 men armed with rifles, shot guns, and pistols put a "speedy end to the guilty wretches" alleged to have murdered a white couple. There was no secrecy. The prisoners were taken from the sheriff in broad daylight by a quiet, "orderly group." No one wore a mask, no one drank except from a well nearby, and no one shouted. The bodies left exposed for fifty-two hours were set upon by buzzards and finally buried by Negroes.³¹

This lynching incident points up the major purpose of anti-Negro mob action in the South. The white community of Abbeville obviously judged that its interests were under attack by the entire Negro community, although only six men and two women (the women were driven from the county) were charged with the crime. If a mere eight individuals, distinguishable only as criminals, had been deemed solely responsible for the crime, the machinery of the law would have been permitted to operate. But the alleged criminals were regarded as representative of subordinate race, who in murdering white people challenged the supremacy of the white community. A popular tribunal, therefore, passed sentence, and the men of the community executed the criminals. Moreover, the execution was conducted in such a way that the

³¹Charleston News and Courier, May 25, 1876. This case of leaving bodies to the buzzards was by no means unique; see, for example, Baton Rouge Capitolian, September 23, 1882.

whole Negro community could not mistake the warning. The refusal to bury the dead was calculated to humiliate the Negro community and to force the Negroes to acknowledge responsibility for a crime made doubly horrible by its being perpetrated upon whites. All local Negroes were expected to feel culpable, while the local white community believed that it had discharged an onerous and imperative duty in vindication of the honor of the race.

Southerners defended lynching on the grounds that Radicals and Negroes were responsible,³² and that silent and swift judgment had a salutary and enduring effect upon an impressionable population among whom laws and morals held feeble sway.³³ Lynching was required by "the highest and most sacred considerations."³⁴ "Self-preservation is the first law of nature, and must and will be obeyed."³⁵ Lynchers were often "among the most respectable portion of the community--men whose good standing in society is a sufficient guarantee that they have taken no part in the violent shedding of blood except under the demand of dire necessity."³⁶ Above

³²New Orleans Picayune, May 30, 1876.

³³Ibid., October 25, 1868.

³⁴New Orleans Crescent, November 4, 1868.

³⁵Wilmington Journal, October 8, 1869; Charleston Journal of Commerce, August 25, 1876.

³⁶New Orleans Picayune, May 16, 1876.

all, it was said, lynching was required to protect wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters who were often troubled in their sleep with visions of Negro brutes and "woke up with cold tremors, which leave traces of weariness upon their tender faces."³⁷ Much spoken of as Southern lawlessness was, according to the defense, "in reality simply a determined and energetic effort to keep the law and the law-making power in the hands of the intelligent and virtuous classes."³⁸

Many Southerners disagreed with the defenders of lynching and condemned violence against Negroes. George Washington Cable was consistent in both opposing violence and objecting also to white supremacy. Undoubtedly numerous "silent Southerners" were, as Cable asserted, equally consistent in beliefs though they did not dare speak out.³⁹ But most critics, like Walter Hines Page,⁴⁰ the Rev. Atticus

³⁷Baton Rouge Capitolian, September 19, 1882; see also, ibid., November 31, 1882; George Braden, "Ku Klux Klan, An Apology," Southern Bivouac, IV (1885), 103-109.

³⁸New Orleans Picayune, July 18, 1887. Between 1889-1898 there were 1,351 lynchings in the South compared with 139 in the North and 110 in the West. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1918 (New York, 1919), 8.

³⁹"A Simpler Southern Solution," Forum, VI (1888), 392-403.

⁴⁰"The Last Hold of the Southern Bully," Forum, XVI (1893), 303-314.

G. Haygood,⁴¹ the Rev. Edgar Gardner Murphy,⁴² and W. P. Trent,⁴³ insisted upon white supremacy while they denounced violence. These white supremacists might well have listened to the ex-slave, Frederick Douglass, who offered an explanation for violence against Negroes. The Negro met no resistance "when on a downward course," Douglass said. It was only when he rose in wealth, education, and manliness that he brought violence upon himself:

When the negro is degraded and ignorant he conforms to a popular standard of what a negro should be. When he shakes off his rags and wretchedness and presumes to be a man, and a man among men, he contradicts this popular standard and becomes an offense to his surroundings.⁴⁴

Who was responsible for lynch law in the South? Not alone the mob, the public hangmen, who simply obeyed public sentiment, he replied. Responsibility also lay upon the men of wealth and respectability, the men of the press and the pulpit, who created and sustained public opinion. The North, too, Douglass pointed out, shared the blame, for it was sympathetic to the South and contemptuous of Africans, Indians, and Mongolians.⁴⁵

⁴¹"The Black Shadow in the South," Forum, XVI (1893), 167-175.

⁴²The White Man and the Negro at the South (Philadelphia, 1900), 19-20.

⁴³"Tendencies of Higher Life in the South," Atlantic Monthly, LXXIX (1897), 769.

⁴⁴"Lynch Law in the South," North American Review, CLV (1892), 21.

⁴⁵Ibid., 20-25.

* * *

As the white race was engaged in warfare against the Negro race, it seemed an intolerable thing for Negroes to become United States soldiers. They might be excluded from the army, or, at the very most, kept in a menial relationship to white fighting men. Negro soldiers would surely claim the privileges enjoyed by their white fellows. As defenders of the country, they could no longer be classed as aliens, but would receive accolades as patriots. Moreover, Negro ex-soldiers who retained vestiges of military discipline would offer a too stiff test to the vaunted fighting qualities of the Caucasian mob. In conformity with the prevailing system of thought, just as it was necessary to believe that the Negro lacked the capacity to succeed in scholarship or politics, it was also necessary to believe that he lacked military virtues. Thus the Southerner equally despised the Negro soldier of the Civil War and the black volunteer of the Spanish-American War.

The Portsmouth (Va.) Enterprise gave expression to the Southern mind in responding to a eulogy by General Benjamin Butler on colored soldiers who served under him in the Civil War. Contrary to the claims of this lying Radical, the Enterprise asserted, Negro troops had scattered like sheep before the earthworks of Fort Gilmer, Virginia, as

the war was drawing to a close. On this occasion Butler's 3,000 colored soldiers, quailing in a field behind the shelter of cornstalks, were defeated by two companies of Virginia infantry and a company of Louisiana artillery.⁴⁶

After the war the Negro soldier was "turned loose on those he had formerly served." Ferocity and evil passion latent in his nature was then aroused. "When he returned from military service to pose as a hero among those of his own color" he became a henchman of scalawags and carpet-baggers, who "abusing the confidence of the deluded blacks, robbed the whites, and well-nigh destroyed the already devastated South."⁴⁷

During the Spanish-American War the Southerner argued that it was inexpedient to raise Negro troops. It was better for the Negro, he claimed, if the armed services enlisted only whites, otherwise bad blood would be caused between the races. The nation chose to accept Negro volunteers, however, and riots occurred at Chattanooga, at Ebor City in Florida, and at San Francisco, where white soldiers refused to salute a Negro officer. Racial antagonism was bound to be aroused, the Southerner claimed, whenever Negroes were placed on a

⁴⁶In Carrollton West Alabamian, February 11, 1874.

⁴⁷Basil Duke, Reminiscences of General Basil W. Duke, C.S.A. (New York, 1911), 241.

footing of military equality with white soldiers, because the Southern people believed that this was the first step in pushing Negroes on to a footing of social equality as well. It was wrong to raise colored regiments, and an act of supreme folly to put them under the command of Negro officers. Not a man in a Southern regiment would salute a Negro officer. If a Negro regiment should be ordered to quell a disturbance in a white community of the South, the riot would become a revolution. It was obvious that this business of enlisting colored troops was the worst mistake the government had made since it gave the Negro political equality.⁴⁸

The arguments against the enlistment of Negro soldiers indicate the determination of the South to withhold opportunities from the black race. In respect to Negro soldiers, the white South was being consistent. Its image of the Negro as inferior, constructed from scientific, scriptural, and historical materials, constituted the basic element in Negro-white relations from the Civil War until 1900 and beyond.

⁴⁸New Orleans Times-Democrat, in Charleston News and Courier, July 10, 1898.

PART II

NEGROES IN POLITICS

CHAPTER V

BLACK VOTERS DURING RECONSTRUCTION

Emancipation of slaves inevitably forced the nation to consider the question of Negro suffrage. Negroes and Indians had been the only large groups excluded from America's commitment to universal manhood suffrage; the Indians as savages and wards, the Negroes as slaves. A body of freemen without suffrage would be, like slavery itself, a contradiction of the American ideal. Republican politicians in search of power joined impatient equalitarians in a movement to enfranchise the freedmen.

White Southerners responded with united opposition. Despite the loss of political influence which followed overwhelming defeat, they hoped to check the revolution which emancipation had brought upon them. Two months after the end of the War the Richmond Times stated that former masters would not permit Negroes to exercise the right of suffrage; as "free negroes" they were laborers to be paid for their services and protected like unnaturalized foreigners, infants, and women, "but vote they shall not."¹ In February

¹June 2, 1865, cited in John Preston McConnell, Negroes and Their Treatment in Virginia from 1865 to 1867 (Pulaski, Va., 1910), 87.

of the following year the Virginia legislature adopted a resolution declaring that the state would not voluntarily consent to change the adjustment of political power.²

Conservatives in Arkansas denied that Negroes had any political rights whatever; they could claim toleration by white men on humanitarian grounds alone.³ The Florida Constitutional Convention of 1865 ordained "that the laws of the State shall be made and executed by the white race."⁴ During 1865 South Carolinians argued that there was no inherent connection between citizenship and suffrage.⁵ Negroes, therefore, should receive all "those grants and privileges . . . essential to their new condition of liberty,"⁶ not including suffrage, which they lacked intelligence and virtue to understand. Voting was not a right but a privilege entrusted by the community to the

²Cited in ibid., 77.

³Paul Lewinson, Race, Class, and Party: A History of Negro Suffrage and White Politics in the South (New York, 1932), 42.

⁴Florida Convention Journal, 1865 (Tallahassee, 1865), 81, cited in ibid., 37.

⁵Charleston Courier, July 27, 1865.

⁶Ibid., August 31, 1865.

individual.⁷

In Tennessee Negroes appealed to the state convention in January, 1865, for the right to vote. Their petition was ignored, and they were soon, by the passage of a Black Code, treated as a peculiar class of inferior people. A Colored State Convention of August 6-11, 1866, then petitioned Congress for the liberties and privileges the state denied.⁸ The Memphis Appeal thought it better, however, for the black race to be swept away by a pestilence than to be enfranchised, believing the right to vote could as safely be given to monkeys as to Negroes.⁹

General Benjamin G. Humphreys, recently pardoned by President Johnson upon his election as governor of Mississippi, announced in an address to the state legislature in November, 1865, that the several hundred thousand Negroes "turned loose upon society" in Mississippi could expect the state to be a just guardian, but because of moral and intellectual deficiencies could not "be admitted to political or social equality with the white race." The

⁷Ibid., September 1, 1865.

⁸A. A. Taylor, The Negro in Tennessee, 1865-1880 (Washington, 1941), 2-11.

⁹February 26, 1867, cited in ibid., 45.

government of the state was and "shall ever be a government of white men."¹⁰ Mississippi, like Tennessee, refused to absorb ex-slaves into the body politic.

The white people of Louisiana also congratulated themselves upon making "many concessions" but asked "that the right of suffrage and privilege of equality in the social circle be withheld from the negro."¹¹ Freedmen, they said, were "protected in their new and anomalous condition" by the Black Codes, and the suffrage was not, as many Northerners thought, needed for their self defense.¹² If the Negroes voted, there should be only three white men in the legislature of one hundred and fifty, for no more than one out of fifty whites believed Negroes should be enfranchised; and the governor and all members of the congressional delegation, save perhaps one, should be black. On the other hand, if representation were based upon population, the resulting "black and white mosaic" would end in anarchy and revolution.¹³ Furthermore, the right to vote was not a natural

¹⁰"Monthly Record of Events," Harper's Magazine, XXXII (1865), 127.

¹¹New Orleans Crescent, December 5, 1865.

¹²Ibid., March 22, 1866.

¹³Ibid., March 28, 1866.

right, else women and children, excluded on the grounds of mental incompetence, would possess the right-- they were far more intelligent than Negroes. If tests were necessary, "the test of color, distinguishing as it does, in fact, between the ignorant and uneducated class, and the relatively intelligent and educated class, is a far more philosophic test than any other that can be devised."¹⁴

Before the end of 1865 the former Postmaster General of the Confederacy, John H. Reagan, anticipating the powerful pressure that would come from the North, suggested that the South might confer suffrage on freedmen and at the same time render the Negro electorate harmless by requiring tests for new voters but none for the old.¹⁵ Reagan's suggestion had no appreciable effect. In 1866 the governors of Georgia and Mississippi urged Congress not to override the South's objections to Negro suffrage, and Alexander H. Stephens asked the Southern States to reject restoration if Negro suffrage were a condition.¹⁶

¹⁴Ibid., November 20, 1867.

¹⁵"Monthly Record of Events," Harper's Magazine, XXXII (1865), 126.

¹⁶Ibid., XXXIII (1866), 125.

During Presidential Reconstruction no move was made in any state of the Deep South to give Negroes the suffrage. Mississippi rejected the Thirteenth Amendment, so also did Kentucky, fearing that its enforcing section would be construed so as to give Congress power to enfranchise the freedmen. Alabama, Florida, and South Carolina attached riders to their ratification in an attempt to guard against such an interpretation.¹⁷ But the Southern states, unrepresented in Congress, were powerless to check congressional Radicals. The first series of Reconstruction Acts, passed in February, March, and July, 1867, denied the legality of the Lincoln and Johnson governments, divided the South into military districts, and ordered new constitutional conventions, with Negro suffrage. In addition, Radicals forced the adoption of the Fifteenth Amendment, thus fastening upon the South "universal suffrage in all its hideous shapes and consequences."¹⁸

Negroes had discovered their strength and were not to be put off with the "simple privilege of voting," the Fort Smith Herald declared, but were "determined to have a proper and proportionate division of offices, from

¹⁷Lewinson, Race, Class, and Party, 36.

¹⁸Wilmington Journal, October 30, 1868.

members of Congress on down to the smallest State offices."¹⁹ As a consequence, the Wilmington Journal complained, ignorance, corruption and irresponsibility strutted "with brazen effrontery in Halls where once intelligence, integrity and responsibility modestly held sway."²⁰

President Johnson endeared himself to Southern leaders, whom he had opposed as a Unionist, by endeavoring to halt the revolution against the white governments established under presidential auspices. In a message to Congress December 3, 1867, he denounced Negro suffrage, and emphasized that it, together with punitive measures against Confederate leaders, opened the way to "negro domination."²¹ The following year, in a message to the House of Representatives, June 20, 1868, Johnson raised constitutional objections against the Arkansas Test Oath, which read, "I accept the civil and political equality of all men, and agree not to attempt to deprive any person or persons, on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude, of any political, civil, or religious

¹⁹August 24, 1867.

²⁰December 29, 1868.

²¹John D. Richardson, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents (with additions), 20 vols. (New York, 1897-1929), VIII, 3762.

right, privilege, or immunity enjoyed by any other class of men." He noted that a large proportion of the electors in all the states "do not believe in or accept the practical equality of Indians, Mongolians, or negroes, with the race to which they belong."²² On this point, according to a Fort Smith editor, Johnson's statement was too conservative; not one in a thousand Arkansas whites believed the Negro to be his equal.²³

Though they could not prevent it, Negro suffrage was difficult for Southern whites to accept. An "irrepressible conflict," it seemed, had been brought upon the South by the attempt to force "negro equality" upon white people.²⁴ Since "negroes must go to the wall" in such a conflict, it was "cruel in the heartless carpet bag politicians to lead these poor people to destruction."²⁵ The New Orleans Crescent argued that Negro enfranchisement was unthinkable because the whites were the "only people of Louisiana," the blacks having never been accepted into the body politic:

²²Ibid., 3848.

²³Fort Smith Herald, January 18, 1868.

²⁴Ibid., June 27, 1868.

²⁵Carrollton West Alabamian, April 13, 1870.

Of course the Radicals will say that they were made so by the potent influence of the late lamented Lincoln's proclamation and the reconstruction measures of a 'trooly loil' Congress. But it takes something more than a proclamation, even though it be signed by the departed Lincoln, and than a statute, even though it be the act of a Radical Congress, to transform an ignorant, servile population into a 'people.' Legislative acts and military force may give the negroes something which is called a right to vote, and carpet-baggers and scalawags may lead them up to the polls and instruct them how to deposit their ballots; but no such expedients can ever make them anything else than an intrusive and anomalous element in a political community of white people, trained by tradition, by inheritance, and by custom to the exercise of political rights. Negroes may vote as much and as long as you please . . .; they may put carpet-baggers and scalawags into pleasant and profitable places . . .; but they will never constitute any portion of the people of Louisiana.²⁶

A strong element in the South, very probably a heavy majority, unwaveringly opposed Negro suffrage in the decades after Appomattox. The Honeyville (Ala.) Examiner in 1870, speaking for the most militant men of this group, advocated violence to break up the Negro electorate, until such time as other means could be devised. Negro suffrage, this journal stated, "is upon us in 1870, and, in the absence of civil commotions, it will be upon us in 1970."²⁷ As the Southerner clung to the essentials of pro-slavery thought,

²⁶November 1, 1868.

²⁷Cited in Carrollton West Alabamian, March 16, 1870.

he viewed the Fifteenth Amendment as that "great iniquity,"²⁸ that "boldly, daringly, and confessedly revolutionary" amendment.²⁹ Social equality of the races was felt to be the logical consequence of political equality. With this in mind a constituent of a member of the Virginia legislature explained his allegiance to the white man's party: "I hain't no objection to the Republican party . . . it's the niggers . . . it's the NIGGERS."³⁰ A Northern observer in 1873 saw no hope that Louisiana would admit that the Negro was competent to "vote or legislate intelligently, or is ever likely to be." White leaders in Louisiana contented themselves with "deriding their inferiors," and with anarchy at their doors refused to make an effort "toward reconciliation, or a proper understanding between the races."³¹

The South's continuing antagonism toward Negro suffrage as an unnatural thing which elevated incompetence

²⁸Fort Smith Herald, April 9, 1870.

²⁹Carrollton West Alabamian, August 9, 1871.

³⁰Cited by Ludlow, "Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute," Harper's Magazine, XLVII (1873), 672.

³¹King, "The Great South: Old and New Louisiana: II," Scribner's Monthly, VII (1873), 148-149.

while undermining "the best government the world ever saw" found yet another expression in the Southern Review in 1874. The Review offered the creation of the constitution as proof that the people who made it had a "heaven-sent" capacity for self-government. Although the framers were drawn almost at random, it seemed, "from the ends of the earth, there was one thing--only one, but still one--in which they were all alike. They were all white people."³²

Sensible Negroes understood this, white Southerners claimed. Aunt Silvey, for example, told her people "to go long and tend to dere cotton patches and corn fields; dat's de kind o' votin' dey understan'." Aunt Silvey had no use for civil rights agitation stirred up by foreigners, either. "Think," she said, "of big, black nigger lyin' up in white folks' clean white bed. Bless God! he look like a load o' charcoal in a snow bank." All that her folks wanted, she said, was "plenty to eat, somethin' to w'ar on dere backs and somewhar to sleep."³³

The Crescent City White League was disposed to enlist religion as an ally in the opposition to Negro

³²Cited in Carrollton West Alabamian, August 26, 1874.

³³Sunny South, March 20, 1875.

suffrage. Believing that "hereditary Christian civilization" was menaced by stupid Africanization, the League hoped to marshall all whites against the danger. The Negro was in infancy, the League asserted in the "Platform of the White People of Louisiana," and incapable of citizenship. Whites had mistakenly hoped to enlist the Negro in the Democratic party and teach him responsible citizenship, but he had become more ignorant and dishonest than when given freedom. Whites would protect him, however. When the white man ruled the black was happy and prosperous; where the black man ruled, the race suffered.³⁴

* * *

Unable to prevent the enfranchisement of freedmen, whites sought to dominate the unwanted voters. White man's government was by definition opposed to the Negro's interests, yet Southern whites hoped to obtain Negro support for it. The Negroes for their part remembered the Black Codes, understood the motives of the white man's party, felt the stings of coercion, and had reason to fear that promises made them would be broken one by one as the Southern states were "redeemed." They felt, moreover, they had benefited

³⁴Address of the Crescent City White League, printed in Carrollton West Alabamian as "A Splendid Document," July 15, 1874.

more from the Radical governments, whatever their corruption, disorderliness, and incompetence, than from the "honest governments" of the "intelligent and virtuous" classes, whether Johnson or redeemed. As a result, attempts to woo the Negro electorate failed.

Negroes, or at least the more aggressive among them, actually desired the privileges enjoyed by white people and hoped to secure them by political action. As delegates to Radical and Scalawag conventions in Virginia from 1865 to 1867, Negroes spoke on behalf of absolute Negro-white equality.³⁵ Negro voters convened in Lexington, Kentucky, in the spring of 1870, adopted a platform frankly avowing their desire for racial equality, and asserting their political power to achieve this end. Declaring the Negroes in their district held the balance of power, they requested white Radicals to accept them as equals or get out of the Republican party, demanded that Negro candidates be put forward, and urged all "weak-kneed white Radicals" to make way for white men "who would acknowledge straight out their equality with the negro and then act it out."³⁶

³⁵McConnell, Negroes and Their Treatment in Virginia, 28-29.

³⁶Printed in Carrollton West Alabamian, April 13, 1870.

In Louisiana, in 1873, Negroes demanded as the price for support in overthrowing the Radical government, a "miserable programme of Mongrelism and Africanization."³⁷ A Negro voter informed the unificationists: "When you white gentlemen will agree to admit us to your society on equal terms, and not until then, we will agree to help you to elect men to office."³⁸

After the fall of Radicalism, ambitious Negroes still hoped to make gains through the instrumentality of politics. In Virginia in 1879, Negroes in convention demanded mixed juries, although the colored electorate was then enfeebled.³⁹ The Negro writer, Richard T. Greener, in 1884, anticipating growing power among Southern blacks, predicted that by 1984 white politicians would seek marital alliances with black families in order to enhance their political appeal to colored voters.⁴⁰ In 1890 Negroes in convention in Charleston listened to one of their speakers demand "turkey"

³⁷Ibid., July 2, 1873. For the unification movement see T. Harry Williams, "The Louisiana Unification Movement of 1873," Journal of Southern History, XI (1945), 349-369.

³⁸Carrollton West Alabamian, August 6, 1873. To this end Negroes subordinated all other political aims. Elsie M. Lewis, "The Political Mind of the Negro, 1865-1900," Journal of Southern History, XXI (1955), 189-202.

³⁹Charlottesville Chronicle, June 20, 1879.

⁴⁰"The Future of the Negro," North American Review, CXXIX (1884), 90.

in payment for votes, for, he said, South Carolina Negroes had been kept hungry for the fourteen years since redemption.⁴¹

In view of the Negro's desire to gain the equality which Southern whites adamantly denied him, it is not surprising that attempts to use the Negro electorate as a prop for white supremacy on a southwide basis eventually failed and were abandoned in favor of disfranchisement. Before disfranchisement, however, Southerners tried for many years to control the Negro voters, often expressing inability to understand their utter failure to induce even a "corporal's guard" to go Democratic.⁴²

The Conservatives of Tennessee in 1867 opened a campaign to win colored votes by inviting Negroes to attend their convention in Nashville. A white leader then delivered a strong speech against Negro suffrage. A Negro, Joe Williams, followed with an obsequious speech which disgusted whites and infuriated his colored auditors. Many white delegates walked out when Negroes boldly offered suggestions, and the meeting ended in signal failure. An attempt to repair the damage by organizing a Colored

⁴¹Charleston News and Courier, October 16, 1890.

⁴²Wilmington Journal, November 14, 1868.

Conservative Convention a few days later also failed. Conservatives, still hoping for Negro support, declared that Negroes were entitled to all the rights and privileges of citizens under both state and national law, whereupon the Conservatives nominated for governor Emerson Etheridge, who had expressed decidedly hostile views toward Negroes only a few days earlier. As evidence mounted that the Negroes meant to vote for Radicals who offered constructive action rather than for Conservatives who made confused promises not to take away privileges already granted, the Conservatives decided either to dominate the Negro electorate or to suppress it.⁴³ Conservative journals began to suggest the use of economic coercion, and white gangs initiated attacks against Negro political gatherings. In Franklin twenty-three Negroes were wounded.⁴⁴ After the Conservatives won control of the legislature in 1869, Negro political power in Tennessee generally declined, leaving the Negroes to employ political meetings principally as a means to protest the loss of civil and political rights.⁴⁵

⁴³Ibid., 56.

⁴⁴For these events see Taylor, The Negro in Tennessee, 47-55.

⁴⁵Ibid., 65-71, 251.

The attempts of the whites to manage the Negro electorate in Tennessee conformed to a pattern observable throughout the South: whites made diffident gestures of political fraternization, offered promises made questionable by contrary expression and action, perceived their failure to gain substantial Negro support, and finally resorted to coercion. Upon regaining political control whites continued to weaken the black electorate until it was practically destroyed.

* * *

In every Southern state, local groups calling themselves Conservatives had been formed to dispute political power with the Negroes and carpetbaggers. At first Conservatism was, as we have seen, disposed to seek Negro support, but it soon began to draw the "color line" in its fight to pull down the carpetbagger-Negro governments. Whites who had differed concerning important political questions were exhorted to bury their differences in a broad common front against Radicals and Negroes.⁴⁶

The Conservatives were deeply interested in the national election of 1868 because they believed that if a Democratic president and Congress would be chosen the

⁴⁶Lewinson, Race, Class, and Party, 51-52.

Radical program for the South would be set aside before it had fairly gotten under way. Early in 1868 politicians and editors were already engaged in exhorting the whites to gird for political battle. Nothing was more deplorable than Negro rule, it was argued, and the only way to escape it was by united, determined action. Rising enthusiasm among the whites to prevent Negro supremacy was reported. Like their forefathers who had founded the government, whites believed that their country "was made to be governed by white people, and not to be turned over to the control of a mass of ignorant semi-barbarians."⁴⁷ People everywhere without regard to their pasts, whether they had been Whigs, Democrats, or Republicans, Confederate soldiers or Union, were said to be joining forces to defeat the project of the "negro worshippers" to Africanize the South.⁴⁸

As the campaign progressed exciting mass meetings were called, with enthusiastic speechmaking and the adoption of resolutions.⁴⁹ "By the help of God let us make the effort, and consecrate ourselves to the work," editors

⁴⁷Fort Smith Herald, February 8, 1868.

⁴⁸Ibid. See also New Orleans Crescent, January 31, 1868.

⁴⁹Fort Smith Herald, February 29, 1868.

urged.⁵⁰ Be ready to register, they enjoined. Let every Democratic club be active,⁵¹ let good men come to the front.⁵² Organize, the voters were told, "with the discipline of a well organized army."⁵³ Encourage the timid, strengthen the weak; work strenuously, untiringly, unceasingly, with organization and unity, white leaders admonished. "A little weakness here and there on the skirmish line" should not be discouraging.⁵⁴ It was the manifest duty of every citizen to win for Seymour and Blair.

The Democratic Committee of New Hanover County, North Carolina, issued an address in October, 1868, begging everyone to register and perfect the local political organization. "Your native state calls upon her sons to be up and doing" and to "rally to her redemption," the committee proclaimed. "We will have no more sloth or despondency, but our camp, gleaming with its bright watch-fires, shall resound with the busy preparation of the coming

⁵⁰Charleston Courier, July 17, 1868.

⁵¹New Orleans Picayune, September 10, 1868.

⁵²New Orleans Crescent, October 2, 1868.

⁵³Wilmington Journal, October 7, 1868. See also ibid., October 14, 15, 1868.

⁵⁴Shreveport Southwestern, October 16, 1868.

conflict."⁵⁵ In view of the nature of the struggle the recreant North Carolinian who failed to register and vote committed a crime.⁵⁶ A Louisiana editor similarly called on each white citizen to be faithful to his honor, "his race and his country."⁵⁷

Grant's victory in this close election caused some leaders to suggest compromise with the enemy, but the most effective voice heard in the South, even when the strategy was to woo Negro support for the Southern Democracy, continued to be that raised for white unity, white organization, white political warfare to oust the robbers and barbarians from their stronghold, to meet them "on the open plain and secure their defeat."⁵⁸ Southern leaders on numerous occasions stressed the likeness of a political party to a great army. Thus, in the interval between active campaigns much straggling might be permitted; but when it was necessary "to form the forces for battle every man must move together as if it had but one soul." Duty

⁵⁵Wilmington Journal, October 28, 1868.

⁵⁶Ibid., November 1, 1868.

⁵⁷New Orleans Picayune, November 3, 1868.

⁵⁸Carrollton West Alabamian, July 6, 1870.

demanded that each voter forget animosities or peculiarities of opinion for the sake of unity of action and party discipline. "On the field of battle every man, whatever may be his private taste in dress, must wear the uniform of his regiment, and keep step to the music."⁵⁹ The success of the great Prussian Army of 1870 encouraged an editor to predict similar victory for the white South if every man enrolled "in his political company, regiment, division and corps."⁶⁰

* * *

The Liberal Republican revolt presented an opportunity for the white man's party to manipulate a coalition to destroy Radical Reconstruction on the national level as it was in the process of doing on the state level. In some of the Southern states the advocates of white man's government, profiting by splits among the Radicals, had already undermined Radical rule in Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia. Now division within the National Republican party offered the entire South the opportunity to coalesce with Northern Democrats and Liberal Republicans to crush the Radicals once for all.

⁵⁹Ibid., August 17, 1870.

⁶⁰Ibid., August 17, 1870.

National and state victories were complementary. Temporary fusion on the local level all over the South, even with Negroes, in conjunction with political fractions in the North, could bring into power a friendly President and Congress which would inevitably deprive Radical organizations in the Southern states of the federal support requisite for them to withstand the single-minded opposition of the white man's party.

In the spring of 1871 Southerners began to take serious interest in the growing Liberal Republican criticism of the Grant administration. At this early date the South was pleased by the disarray in the enemy camp but still somewhat reluctant to join forces with Republicans of the Horace Greeley sort. In June an Alabama journal denounced Greeley as an "Old Puritan politician and author of more mischief in this country than any other man."⁶¹ He was classed as one of the "monstrous reformers and murderous philanthropists" who "gloried in the slaughter of millions" to obliterate natural distinctions in an inverted social order.⁶² He was viewed as a "kindly old lunatic" who preached

⁶¹Ibid., June 7, 1870.

⁶²New Orleans Crescent, November 17, 1867.

"guillotinism,"⁶³ and who was an "extreme admirer" of Negroes.⁶⁴ To a Crescent City editor Greeley was as unscrupulous as Beecher and more "vulgar and vituperative."⁶⁵

As soon as it became apparent that he would be the presidential candidate of the Liberal Republicans, the "lunatic" and "murderous" Greeley began to enjoy a laudatory press in the South. He was then presented as a doughty opponent of thieving carpetbaggers, an admirer of Lee and Jackson and Davis, and a powerful advocate of universal amnesty and impartial suffrage.⁶⁶ Far from being a centralizer, it was said, Greeley was a state rights man⁶⁷ who saw the advance of Radical ruin, and identified himself with Democrats as a patriotic necessity to save the country.⁶⁸

B. H. Hill of Georgia pointed out that amnesty had been achieved because of the Liberal Republicans, that Federal control of local elections was prevented by a Liberal Republican-Democratic coalition, and that this

⁶³Ibid., December 10, 1867; February 6, 1868.

⁶⁴Ibid., January 31, 1869.

⁶⁵New Orleans Picayune, September 12, 1868.

⁶⁶Ibid., July 1, 1871.

⁶⁷Ibid., June 22, 1872.

⁶⁸Charleston Courier, July 11, 1872.

coalition had denied Grant authority to suspend the writ of habeas corpus in a campaign to terrorize the South. Furthermore, Hill promised, the election of Greeley would carry in a Democratic House.⁶⁹

A stumbling block to Southern participation in the Democratic-Liberal Republican coalition was the fact that the Northern elements therein objected to the nullification of the Fifteenth Amendment. The Liberal Republicans, convened at Cincinnati, promised impartial suffrage without regard to race and local self-government.⁷⁰ John Quincy Adams told the South in mid-summer, 1871, that the Radical, or War, party would retain power as long as the Fifteenth Amendment was attacked. The hostility to this amendment, which had created the strife necessary to sustain the Radicals, Adams said, was not worth gratifying at the risk of permanent Republican rule. Defining the essence of democracy as the equality of all men before the law, Adams asked, "But who dares face an intelligent people with that

⁶⁹Printed in Carrollton West Alabamian, July 10, 1872.

⁷⁰"Monthly Record of Events," Harper's Magazine, XLV (1872), 312.

testimony upon his lips, and denounce a measure which is too democratic for the Democrats only, because the enfranchised are black?"⁷¹ The Mobile Register replied that Southern opposition to the Fifteenth Amendment was based upon principle and would continue despite Adams and "the new Democracy." The Register was willing, however, to entertain the proposition that this issue be postponed, for "sooner or later the sweep of reaction will come."⁷²

The leaders of the movement to secure home rule by electing Greeley promised to protect the Negro's rights, including his exercise of the suffrage. The Democratic-Conservative State Central Committee of Arkansas, for example, made such a promise, not so much to attract colored votes as to bring in "moderate and conservative white republicans, and especially those of the old native Union element of the state."⁷³ Cassius M. Clay, the former anti-slavery and pro-Union leader of Kentucky, was one who responded to appeals of this sort and came out for Greeley as the man to overcome the subjection of the

⁷¹Carrollton West Alabamian, June 7, 1871.

⁷²Printed in ibid., June 7, 1871.

⁷³Fort Smith Herald, July 29, 1871; New Orleans Picayune, September 22, 1872.

"intelligence and property of the South to ignorance and pauperism."⁷⁴

While promoting coalition, Southern whites were interested in protecting their own unity as the best means to rid their states of Radicals. The people should spurn overtures from Republicans at home, but stand behind the Liberal Republican-Democratic national ticket, remaining "thoroughly united, ready to make our power, our force, our influence felt, whenever and wherever we find it can be made available."⁷⁵ Disregard of party labels was meant to apply only to national affairs.⁷⁶ The irascible Robert Toombs, who had at first viewed the scheme to unite with the Liberal Republicans as destructive of Southern honor, at last concluded that the split in the national Republicans provided the opportunity for the white man's party to triumph in the South without compromising its integrity. There were exigencies, he thought, in which the South might support an enemy to break the enemy's lines.⁷⁷ Fusion

⁷⁴St. Louis Republican, January 20, 1872, printed in Carrollton West Alabamian, February 7, 1872.

⁷⁵Fort Smith Herald, April 13, 1872.

⁷⁶Southern Review, XI (October, 1872), 474.

⁷⁷Atlanta Constitution, June 28, 1872.

was in the interest of redemption, and did not comprehend any local Radicals who had anything to do with misrule.⁷⁸

Toombs spoke for Southern whites in general, who had no intention of abandoning their goal of ruling the Negroes.

"The movement made by the Liberal Republican party at Cincinnati," the Charleston Courier noted, "is but the application of the same principles heretofore so successful in State, to national affairs."⁷⁹

Chary as they were of fusion at home, white Southerners hoped, nevertheless, to gain enough Negro votes to install their own executives in the state houses and to make Greeley chief executive. South Carolina Negroes were invited to back the redemption party on the grounds that they could help elect honest men without endangering their rights, which were already secure, and could restore prosperity by cooperating with those who had the capital to make their labor productive.⁸⁰ Liars impugned the motives of the South, it was claimed, for the South stood fully committed to the Radical constitutions.⁸¹ Louisiana

⁷⁸New Orleans Picayune, August 27, 1872.

⁷⁹July 3, 1872.

⁸⁰Charleston Courier, July 9, 1872.

⁸¹Ibid., September 30, 1872.

Negroes were informed that "negro rule was never known to exalt the power or promote the growth of any negro population," that the contrary was true, but that the Negroes would be elevated up to the "middle ground," though subordinate to whites, if they would help elect the right ticket.⁸²

Appeals were made to the Negroes on the basis that the South's allies were the Negro's friends. Thus the adherence of Charles Sumner to the Greeley Republicans was celebrated as determining the election, because, it was supposed, colored people would follow the lead of their great champion.⁸³ In addition, letters from local Negroes announcing support for the Democrat ticket were expected to swing black votes.⁸⁴

Lest appeals have little effect, threats were tried. Negroes were warned to vote Democratic "or else." Radical electioneering, they were told, made abortive "all appeals of considerate and liberal-minded whites to their black fellow-countrymen" and endangered peace between the two races; an exclusive black man's party would force the

⁸²New Orleans Picayune, August 15, 1872.

⁸³Ibid., August 1, 1872; Charleston Courier, August 1, 1872.

⁸⁴New Orleans Picayune, August 15, 1872.

whites to follow the Negro's example, with a consequent war of races.⁸⁵ Negroes could save themselves from complete disaster, according to the threat, only by dividing themselves politically, for they alone could allay the "haunting apprehension of a conflict of races" which to many good white men had assumed "monstrous proportions of danger."⁸⁶ Negroes were also informed that if they deliberately chose to support disgraceful government, the South would find ways to control nine-tenths of the vote,⁸⁷ the Negroes would suffer the fate of the Indians,⁸⁸ or the South would become "politically Mexicanized," and the Negroes, like the Mexican Indians, would be exploited by the few who voted them.⁸⁹

In the event neither the names of Greeley and Sumner nor appeals and threats had the desired effect. Most Negroes persisted in believing their privileges endangered by a redeemed South. According to the Charleston News and Courier, Greeley was defeated by 700,000 Negro votes.⁹⁰ Although

⁸⁵Ibid., August 1, 1872.

⁸⁶Ibid., August 9, 1872.

⁸⁷Charleston Courier, November 1, 1872.

⁸⁸New Orleans Picayune, September 14, 1872.

⁸⁹Ibid., September 10, 1872.

⁹⁰November 7, 1872.

Negro votes continue to be sought--or forced--for some years to come, the failure to win substantial Negro support in 1872 gave encouragement to the straight-out white Democrats who meant to destroy the Negro electorate.

Had Southern whites been sincere in their promises to accept the Negroes as voting citizens, the subsequent history of the South would have been radically altered. There can, however, be no doubt that the actual dominant interest of the South was to negate the Negro electorate upon the collapse of Radicalism, that Liberal Republicans were aware of this intention but hoped for the best, and that the mass of Negroes had no choice but to support the Grant Republicans in defense of their newly-won privileges. In consequence, Grant won most of the Southern electoral votes, while Cleveland, taking advantage of later Republican disorganization,⁹¹ won them all. By 1884, however, the Negro electorate in the South had been rendered ineffective by the white man's party. The election of 1872, therefore, is especially significant in that it indicates that the

⁹¹If possible, the Liberal Republicans, or Independents, celebrated Cleveland's victory with more enthusiasm than the Democrats. See Allan Nevins, Grover Cleveland: A Study in Courage (New York, 1932), 188.

South's political beliefs and aims had not substantially changed since the enactment of the Black Codes. This election promised a dark future for the Negro.

* * *

Except in Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina, Radical regimes had been overthrown by 1876. During the campaign of this year in the unredeemed states the white man's party continued to appeal for Negro support against "negro domination."

In February, 1876, the New Orleans Picayune assured Negroes that they had no reason to believe Radical charges that a redeemed government would take away their voting privileges by means of an educational qualification. No constitutional change was possible without their consent. Were an educational qualification to be adopted, it would affect only new voters, because "no man can be divested of a vested right and no law can be retroactively construed." Furthermore, the fact that colored youth were being educated afforded protection against the disfranchisement of Negroes as a race. The Picayune denied "the assertion of the Republicans that the Democracy of the State . . . are intolerant of the political equality of the colored people."⁹²

⁹²February 22, 1876.

Former Governor Benjamin F. Perry of South Carolina, promising that all Negroes who joined the Democrats in 1876 would be treated with respect, denied that the triumph of the Democratic party would mean "a return to such legislation as will forever debar the colored man from ever aspiring to anything above a hewer of wood and a drawer of water." Perry hinted, however, that if the Negroes did not support Democrats they faced the possibility of disfranchisement.⁹³ Edward McCrady during this campaign promised that "for weal or woe" Negroes who had the suffrage would be protected in its exercise by the Democrats.⁹⁴ Wade Hampton said at Abbeville that he did not want the votes of whites who expected to receive privileges denied to colored people,⁹⁵ and on another occasion in the campaign stated: "In the presence of South Carolina, and in the presence of my God, I pledge myself that if elected I shall know no party, no color or condition in the administration of the laws."⁹⁶ While Hampton was making promises, Democrats,

⁹³Printed in Charleston Journal of Commerce, August 24, 1876.

⁹⁴Charleston News and Courier, August 26, 1876.

⁹⁵Ibid., September 21, 1876.

⁹⁶Ibid., October 3, 1876. For Hampton's policy toward the Negroes see H. M. Jarrell, Wade Hampton and the Negro: The Road Not Taken (Columbia, S. C., 1949).

by means of the Red Shirts,⁹⁷ applied "force without violence." Negroes who supported the Radicals were declared to be "enemies of whites,"⁹⁸ and the Edgefield trio, Andrew P. Butler, Martin W. Gary, and Benjamin Tillman, believing that "one ounce of fear was worth a pound of persuasion," agitated for violence and intimidation. Tillman's men "executed" Simon Coker, the Negro state senator from Barnwell, for making an "incendiary speech." By such means Hampton's victory by a narrow margin of 1,134 votes was made possible; Edgefield's shotgun policy turned a potential Negro majority of several thousands into a Democratic majority of 3,134. At Landrum's Store Precinct Tillman's mob kept Negroes from voting, while allowing white strangers to vote. The result was the return of 211 Democratic and two Republican votes, instead of the 180 Republican and 104 Democratic votes of two years earlier.⁹⁹

⁹⁷Three thousand mounted Red Shirts, forming a procession three miles long, accompanied Hampton at Abbeville. See Charleston News and Courier, October 19, 1876.

⁹⁸Ibid., September 25, 1876.

⁹⁹Francis Butler Simkins, Pitchfork Ben Tillman: South Carolinian (Baton Rouge, 1944), 61-67. See Stuart Landry, The Battle of Liberty Place: The Overthrow of Carpet-Bag Rule in New Orleans, September 14, 1874 (New Orleans, 1955) for justification of violence against the political Negroes in Louisiana.

CHAPTER VI

SOLID SOUTH AND WHITE SUPREMACY

Unity gained and victory achieved, it might seem that pressure to maintain a solid white bloc would have been relaxed. But restriction of political freedom was maintained, because control of the Negroes required unanimity among whites. If the Compromise of 1876 promised abandonment of Federal intervention in Southern elections, it offered no guarantee that dissident whites and Negroes would not develop formidable alliances against the ruling groups within the states. Whenever a considerable portion of whites grew restive, internal political revolts threatened white supremacy. The practical but illegal exclusion of Negroes from the suffrage created a powerful bloc of potential votes which insurgents might be tempted to bring into play in support of a party seeking economic and social goals rejected by the leaders of the white man's party. Much of the propaganda to maintain white unity was designed to weaken the appeal of insurgent parties, usually "Populist" parties, which, in calling out the Negro vote, threatened to sacrifice white supremacy.

The struggle to maintain unity began as soon as whites regained control in the Southern states. In 1870

the Wilmington Journal warned that redemption recently gained already was seriously threatened by wily enemies who lay in wait until divisions among Conservatives and Democrats should afford opportunities to return to power in North Carolina and to entrench themselves more deeply in other Southern states. The Journal therefore deprecated all discussion of party differences, including such matters as the relative value of the Democratic or the Whig wings of the white man's party, and urged white North Carolinians to remember the villainy of their enemies and to support the Democratic party without reservation.¹

The white people of other Southern states readily entertained the same uncomplicated argument. For example, the able Georgia Leader, Benjamin H. Hill, in an address in October, 1872, called for unity among Democrats to protect the unblemished fruits of redemption from the miserable Radicals, who were secretly plotting to take advantage of white dissension in order to regain the places from which they had recently been expelled. United, Hill promised, Georgians would enjoy such a crushing victory that "from the foulest of political leprosies we and our children shall be free and forever free!"²

¹August 20, 1870.

²Printed in the Charleston Courier, October 3, 1872.

Two years later, the Fort Smith (Arkansas) Herald warned that "minstrel radicalism" was "only napping with one eye open," ready to jump on its prey whenever the people should be off guard. But a "united free people will never permit its hideous head again to appear, even on the surface of politics in Arkansas."³ Bolting, or even discontent with a platform broad enough to comprehend all whites, was proclaimed to be associated with intolerable selfishness, ambition, or perversity.⁴ The platform which the Herald thought broad enough for Arkansas whites was "A Whiteman's Government, one Law for All--Nothing less will do."⁵ Alabamians similarly stood on a platform of "Union, Harmony, Concession--everything for the cause, nothing for men";⁶ white people whether rich or poor, ignorant or learned made up "one great family."⁷ During the national campaign of 1876 the Herald denounced whites who refused to vote the straight Democratic ticket because

³July 18, 1874.

⁴September 11, 1874.

⁵April 22, 1876.

⁶Carrollton West Alabamian, March 19, 1876.

⁷Ibid., June 14, 1876.

certain nominees did not suit them. Arkansas radicalism, powerless to do harm by itself, might gain allies by a split within the Democratic party; all whites must vote the straight ticket or depart as undesirables.⁸

During this campaign Mississippians heard similar addresses from their leaders. The Executive Committee of the Democratic-Conservative Party contrasted the racial harmony, honesty, and economy prevailing under the young white government with the rascality of the former regime. Divisions among the Radicals had enabled the united Democrats to restore honesty to government; now conspiring Radicals hoped that the Democrats would in turn be undermined by splitting.⁹

Following the election of 1876 the Southerner continued to wear with pride his strait-jacket of unity because, in Charles Gayarré's words, the Negro question was "a question of self-preservation of civilization, and of the maintenance of the purity of a superior race."¹⁰ To a Georgia editor unity was a necessity for patriots: "Our

⁸July 29, 1876.

⁹Printed in Charleston Journal of Commerce, August 30, 1876.

¹⁰"The Southern Question," North American Review, CXXV (1877), 479.

unity in the cause of conservatism and home rule is our glory, the nation's best hope, and the salvation of our republican institutions."¹¹ The editor boasted that both United States senators from Georgia and five of the eight representatives had formerly been Whigs but had since become loyal Democrats devoted to the Solid South with faces turned against the Hayes scheme to attach the old Whigs to a white Republican party in the South.¹²

In 1878 the New Orleans Picayune urged the white people of Louisiana to do their political duty or face the humiliating return of reconstruction vassalage. Unity, good will, and harmony, the editor noted, would defeat the wily conspirators who worked for a coalition against the Conservative-Democratic party.¹³ Young voters, it seemed, were attached to the side of honesty and truth despite the machinations of some old rascals.¹⁴ During the election of 1878 the Charlottesville (Virginia) Chronicle similarly

¹¹Atlanta Constitution, March 13, 1877.

¹²Ibid., March 15, 1877. Vincent De Santis discusses this Republican strategy in "President Hayes's Southern Policy," Journal of Southern History, XXI (1955), 476-494.

¹³October 5, 1878. See also ibid., October 23, 1878.

¹⁴Ibid., October 31, 1878.

urged its readers to spurn the party of cheap money,¹⁵ and the Fort Smith (Arkansas) Herald campaigned to turn out true Southerners en masse to beat the Greenback-Republican coalition.¹⁶

In 1878 South Carolinians celebrated the victory of "Solid South Carolina" in every county except the black county of Beaufort, which had lost most of its white population by the creation of Hampton County.¹⁷ Louisianians similarly rejoiced that thousands voted in the election of November 5, 1878, "for candidates whom they did not like, in order that no encouragement might be given to our Radical Republican adversaries in a new disguise."¹⁸

The whites in Virginia had won control of the legislature in 1870, following which they initiated a program that nullified the black electorate. Hoping to prevent the dissolution of the white coalition and the formation of a small farmer, Republican, Negro coalition, a Conservative warned in 1877 that if a Negro were competent to vote,

¹⁵October 11, 1878.

¹⁶October 28, 1878.

¹⁷Charleston News and Courier, November 6, 1878.

¹⁸New Orleans Picayune, November 6, 1878.

"he is certainly fit to eat with us at our tables, to sleep in our beds, to be invited into our parlors, and to do all acts and things which a white man may do."¹⁹ But two years later small farmers and others of modest means, led by a former Confederate general, William Mahone, and known as Readjusters, revived the Negro vote and defeated the Conservatives on the issues of economic liberalism and civil rights. Readjusters then partially repudiated the state debt, abolished the poll tax as a requirement for voting, established a state college for Negroes, increased public school appropriations, and adopted other measures desired by practically all Negroes and a strong contingent of whites.²⁰

The disaster of Independency in Virginia served as a warning to other Southern states. The Charleston News and Courier in 1880 encouraged Democrats to be on guard against "Greenback Republicans" who placed Negroes on the ticket,²¹ and the Baton Rouge Capitolian-Advocate used the Mahone

¹⁹Puryear, The Public School and Its Relations to the Negro, 14.

²⁰Charles E. Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 1870-1902 (Charlottesville, Va., 1961), 16-38. For the view that white Readjusters were traitors to the state, and the Negroes ignorant victims of demagogues, see Richard L. Morton, The Negro in Virginia Politics, 1865-1902 (Charlottesville, Va., 1919), 98-126.

²¹October 22, 1880.

government of Virginia as an argument against real or potential independents in Louisiana in 1882:

When Mahone started out on his course of rebellion against the Democratic party to which his allegiance was sworn, his independent position was highly lauded by certain of the newspapers in Louisiana which go by the general name of Democrat. But when he landed his faction into practical adhesion to the Republican party the acclaims of his admirers were not so loud.²²

Louisiana should learn by this example to avoid discordance among classes and constant danger of social convulsion. Mahone, it seemed, threw himself in the arms of the Negroes and the worst elements of the white population in order to maintain his strength. As a result "vile, corrupt, and ignorant appointees" assumed office, bitterness and strife affected social life, and all decent people came to despise Mahone.

In other words it is the triumph of Radicalism, and all who have suffered the humiliation and seen the abominable incidents of that regime in Louisiana will need no further description. We thus perceive how society in the reconstructed states is always hanging on the edge of an abyss in which there is always recurrent danger of being precipitated. Virginia had successfully emerged from the disorders

²²August 8, 1882. Arthur supported the economic radicals in Virginia in the hope of reviving the Republican party in the South. Vincent De Santis, "President Arthur and the Independent Movements in the South in 1882," Journal of Southern History, XIX (1953), 352-353.

incident to reconstruction and had entered on a hopeful pathway of progress and material advancement. But our recreant sons backed by the Administration, and using the votes of ignorant freedmen have precipitated her again in the ignominy of a new reconstruction.²³

"The land of Washington and Jefferson is now the land of Mahone, and the spirit of Tweed is omnipotent in the old land where the bones of Robert E. Lee are buried," Louisianians were told. It should be apparent, therefore, that the "nomination of this or that Gubernatorial candidate is unimportant, compared with the preservation of the unity and harmony of the party."²⁴

In consequence of this belief, white voters in 1882 as in 1876 were admonished to spurn all overtures to divide against the public interest or face degradation of carpetbagger-Negro government with its miserable baggage of corruption, tyranny, and unnatural notions of social equality.²⁵ Until the Radical system of controlling the Negro vote was subverted, "whatever difference of opinion there may be in local matters, there can be none in regard

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., October 13, 1882.

²⁵Ibid., September 14, 15, and 21, October 9 and 10, and November 2, 1882.

to this vital subject."²⁶ The campaign of 1882 in Louisiana "brought back within the fold, estranged brethren, who in the trying days of the past had fought valiantly alongside, in the battles for the redemption of the State."²⁷

The election of 1882 frightened leaders in other Southern states also. In South Carolina it was observed that the Greenback Labor Reform Party was forced to offer terms to the Radicals. Conservatives feared that this coalition would, unless the people spurned the evil embrace of Radicalism, result in the overthrow of white government, mongrelization of the state, and degradation of white people.²⁸ According to Hampton the danger from Radicals in disguise was as great as in 1876: "I tell you that he who is not with us . . . is a traitor to the State."²⁹ Editors joined in berating supporters of the "Greenback-Negro,"³⁰ the "African,"³¹ or the "Greenback-Radical" party.³² In

²⁶Ibid., November 10, 1882.

²⁷Ibid., January 6, 1883.

²⁸Charleston News and Courier, August 10, 1882.

²⁹Ibid., October 13, 1882.

³⁰Ibid., October 14, 1882.

³¹Ibid., October 28, 1882.

³²Ibid., November 8, 1882.

Georgia Independentism was "signally rebuked" all through the state by the election of Alexander H. Stephens, former Vice-President of the Confederacy, as governor.³³

In 1883 the white man's party of Virginia launched an aggressive campaign against "negro loving" Readjusters. Benefiting from racial encounters, especially the Danville Riot of November 4, 1883, straightout whites regained control of the state government. J. L. M. Curry, then a professor in Richmond College and a leading Conservative, described the public reaction to news of victory over the Negroes: "Old men wept. The young were hilarious. The women thanked God."³⁴ There was no longer any doubt about the place of Negroes in Virginia politics. As former Confederate General Jubal A. Early declared, Negroes must learn from this defeat to behave themselves and keep in their places.³⁵

Although "Independentism" might appear signally rebuked, in 1890 the agrarian movement marked up its greatest success in the South, winning a sweeping victory in Georgia,

³³Atlanta Constitution, October 6, 1882.

³⁴J. L. M. Curry to R. C. Winthrop, November 8, 1883, cited by Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 35.

³⁵Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 32.

electing the president of the State Alliance governor in Tennessee, and committing to the Alliance some forty United States congressmen and several senators.³⁶ In this contest statutory disfranchisement proved insufficient to keep Negroes from voting. In some localities planters and Populists vied in marching their own Negro supporters to the polls and in intimidating those of the opposing faction.³⁷

In South Carolina in 1890 a Conservative faction led by Alexander Haskell sought to call out the disfranchised Negroes to defeat the populist Benjamin Tillman, but the insurgents, in this case, were strong enough to prevent Negroes from deciding the election. Although the Haskellites had intimidated Negroes in 1876, they campaigned on the promises of justice for the Negroes made by Hampton in 1876. To compound the ironics Tillman made strong threats against colored voters but Hampton publicly supported Tillman's election on the ground that every Democratic administration since 1876 had been honest.³⁸ The Charleston News and Courier,

³⁶Paul Lewinson, Race, Class, and Party: A History of Negro Suffrage and White Politics in the South (New York, 1932), 77.

³⁷Ibid., 76-78. Theodore Saloutos, Farmer Movements in the South (Berkeley, Calif., 1960), 132.

³⁸Charleston News and Courier, October 27, 1890.

displaying less reticence than Hampton did, met the dilemma by switching from sharp criticism of Tillman to unqualified support of him. It claimed that the welfare of the nation and of South Carolina depended upon the Democratic party and white supremacy, and in South Carolina "white supremacy can only be maintained by the white people remaining united in politics, and, the Democratic party being the white people's party, it is necessary for their own safety that they shall remain solidly Democratic."³⁹ The leaders of the Haskell movement were admittedly earnest, thoughtful, and patriotic men, but they had become Independents, and as such must be defeated for the sake of white supremacy. Finding Tillman distasteful and Haskell attractive, the journal announced that it was supporting Tillman not personally but as representative of the Democratic party.⁴⁰ White solidarity within that party was for the "manifest advantage and prosperity of all the people of the State, black as well as white."⁴¹ The real question at issue, the News and Courier asserted, was whether to vote for the white people or the Negroes.⁴²

³⁹Ibid., October 18, 1890.

⁴⁰Ibid., October 18, 1890.

⁴¹Ibid., October 24, 1890.

⁴²Ibid., November 3, 1890.

The Negroes of South Carolina having been made to understand the folly and danger in "meddling" in the white people's quarrel,⁴³ did not participate in the election heavily enough to affect the outcome, which was a victory for Tillman. And soon the whites who had supported Haskell were welcomed back into the Democratic party in order to repair the rift which had appeared to threaten white supremacy.⁴⁴

Two years later, in 1892, politicians called to the attention of South Carolina whites the object of the Federal Elections Bill, or "Force Bill," defeated a year earlier but still a threat. The "Force Bill" was designed, it was said, to make the Southern states Republican, following which segregated schools would be abolished, heavy taxes levied to educate the Negroes, legislation enacted making it a crime to discriminate against the employment of Negroes, laws against miscegenation repealed, and other action destructive of Southern civilization taken. As there was no peace nor safety for the South as long as a "Force Bill" was possible, it was necessary for all true

⁴³Ibid., October 31, 1890.

⁴⁴Ibid., November 5, 1890.

Southerners to vote solidly Democratic.⁴⁵ Everything that had been gained since Reconstruction would be lost if whites, forgetting the danger to their supremacy, voted as Third Partyites, Allianceites, or Conservatives.⁴⁶

Factionalism and third party movements plagued the white man's party in other states besides South Carolina. As one example, a sizeable group of Louisianians were obliged to swallow their discontent with the machine of S. D. McEnery to thwart the development of a split which might have handed victory to the "Republican party with its army of black voters."⁴⁷ Thus the "alliance men and other so-called Democrats and Republicans" lost their bid for power in 1891.⁴⁸

Following the defeat of Populism in 1896 it seemed to W. P. Trent that a Southerner could be an "independent voter and not be too rudely stared at." He thought that

⁴⁵Ibid., October 26, 1892.

⁴⁶Ibid., November 7, 1892.

⁴⁷New Orleans Picayune, August 23, 1891.

⁴⁸Ibid., November 10, 1891. In order to avoid the "Africanization of the South" many whites inclined toward radicalism voted Democratic in the election of 1892. Saloutos, Farmer Movements in the South, 135; Charleston News and Courier, October 7, 1892. Watson called on his white supporters to arm the Negroes and carry them to the polls, ibid., October 20, 1892.

freedom of speech and action were becoming more assured except in one particular, "the advocacy of negro equality."⁴⁹ The difficulty was that independents were usually forced to seek Negro support if they hoped to unseat the ruling party, and by seeking such support they invited ostracism as advocates of Negro equality.

In North Carolina in 1898 the chief issue to white supremacists was "the white man or the Negro." The state seemed to them overrun and ruled by an ignorant and vicious element of Negro Republicans and base Populists, from governor to township council. Governor Dan Russell was charged with inducing the fusionist Republican-Populist legislature into gerrymandering Negroes into control. As a result of such treason, it was said, white women in black districts were afraid to walk the streets. Newbern and other towns in the east became Negroized, and as many Negroes as white men sat on the juries in Craven County. Degenerate whites were blamed for this state of affairs. Women were told that they could do something about it by spurning the advances of men who supported the fusionists. After white men's unions developed in country districts, and were joined by many former Populists who feared

⁴⁹"Dominant Forces in the South," Atlantic Monthly, LXXIX (1897), 52.

Negro domination, white men reasserted their supremacy.⁵⁰

The brief success in North Carolina of a third party coalition of whites and Negroes was the last in the South of the period. According to an authority on Southern Populism,

Racism was exploited in the South with fantastic refinements and revolting excesses in the Populist period.

But perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the whole Populist movement was the resistance its leaders in the South put up against racism and racist propaganda and the determined effort they made against incredible odds to win back political rights for the Negroes, defend their rights against brutal aggression, and create among their normally anti-Negro following, even temporarily, a spirit of tolerance in which the two races of the South could work together in one party for the achievement of common ends.⁵¹

When the Populists failed, or when they gained supremacy within the white man's party, some of their leaders turned against the Negro.⁵²

White supremacy had been so endangered by desertion from the Democratic party that Conservatives who despised the Tillmans and Bryans, and favored the gold standard,

⁵⁰Charleston News and Courier, August 26, 1898.

⁵¹C. Vann Woodward, The Burden of Southern History (Baton Rouge, 1960), 156-157.

⁵²Ibid., 157.

high tariffs, and expansion, nevertheless voted for Bryan because they could not support Southern electors for McKinley who were likely to be Negroes and "disreputable" whites.⁵³ Later, at the beginning of the "New Age" following McKinley's defeat of Bryan in 1900, some Southern business men felt that they might be able to join the conservative Republicans. "There is no longer a miscegenated, populite, democratic party standing in threatening attitude to frighten and disturb and check business enterprise."⁵⁴

In the event neither conservative industrialists nor radical farmers and laborers in the South were permitted to undermine white supremacy by leaving the Democratic party in appreciable numbers. However the independents were looked at, as advocates of a white man's government who inadvertently courted defeat by splitting the white vote in the face of the united Negro electorate, or as advocates of an outright bargain with the Negroes, they were considered

⁵³Charleston News and Courier, November 1, 3, 4, 11, 1896. See especially ibid., November 5, 6, 19, 1900.

⁵⁴William Robert Moore, An Open Letter to the Young Men and Boys of the Southern States (Memphis, 1900), 2.

dangerous to white supremacy. Thus Southern leaders were forced to battle against "Independency" as a crime against the white race. Practically, what political freedom the Southern whites enjoyed could be exercised only in the making of Democratic policy and in the selection of Democratic candidates in the white primary.

Southerners frequently ascribed white solidarity to the prior solidarity of a black mass of ignorance that had promised to destroy civilization. Whites had been forced into a "compact organization in obedience to the higher law of self-preservation which God in his wisdom has instituted."⁵⁵ The carpetbagger Albion Tourgee attacked the ground upon which this justification of the solid South was based. The arguments supporting white rule Tourgee found to be "identical with those adduced in favor of slavery." They were urged "by the same class of our people, with the same unanimity, the same positiveness, and the same arrogant assumption of infallibility as of old."⁵⁶ Actually it was Negro solidarity that was defensive, Tourgee claimed:

⁵⁵Ethelbert Barksdale, "Reconstruction in Mississippi," Why the Solid South?, edited by Hilary Herbert (Baltimore, 1890), 348.

⁵⁶"Shall White Minorities Rule?" Forum, VII (1889), 144.

No race can separate into parties or factions while its rights and liberties are assailed by another on the ground of race alone. Their rights must be freely admitted before they will dare to surrender whatever power there may be in cohesion. To do otherwise would be an act of stupendous and incredible folly. One might as well expect a herd of sheep to separate in the presence of wolves.⁵⁷

Nevertheless, Southerners considered themselves as uniting in defense of civilization against the aggression of barbarian cohorts of Negroes. Charles W. Dabney, in a commencement address at the University of Alabama, averred that the solid South was based upon a high principle more fundamental than sectionalism, race prejudice, or political necessity.⁵⁸ Reviewing recent history, Dabney claimed the South had taken the course of secession to maintain state rights; that the war had solved the problem of the relation of the states to the Federal Government without destroying the rights of states; but that the ballot had then been "conferred upon a horde of negroes, ignorant and immoral, trained to dependence, incapable of intelligent self-direction."⁵⁹ This disastrous mistake, now fully

⁵⁷Ibid., 153.

⁵⁸The Meaning of the Solid South (n.p., 1909), 3.

⁵⁹Ibid., 8.

acknowledged as such in the North, made the solid South a necessity and crystallized it into being. "To a unit, the white voters resisted the domination through the ballot of an ignorant and inferior people," by force at first and then by legislation, when this became possible.⁶⁰

⁶⁰Ibid., 9.

CHAPTER VII

NEGRO DISFRANCHISEMENT

White Southerners had rejected Negro suffrage during Presidential Reconstruction and had used illegal means, including violence, to thwart its effects in the struggle against Carpetbag government. Having created a solid front in successful political warfare during Reconstruction, they were prepared to evolve a plan to force Negroes altogether out of politics.

On March 16, 1874, following the defeat of the Radical state government, Governor Richard Coke of Texas remarked in a message to the legislature that in the state there were "40,000 unenlightened black voters, natural followers in their simplicity and ignorance of the unscrupulous trickster and demagogue." They had equal privileges with whites "at the ballot box and in the jury box." The Governor then suggested that changes be made in the state constitution to deal with this threat to white man's government.¹

¹Texas State Library, Archive and History Department, ed., Governors' Messages: Coke to Ross, 1874-1891 (Austin, 1916), 43. Texas relied upon statutory law rather than constitutional amendment to disfranchise Negroes.

Redeemers of Alabama speculated in 1875 whether it should become an object of the Democratic party to effect the disfranchisement of Negroes.² Unwilling to consider the question debatable, J. C. Delavigne demanded immediate disfranchisement. "It is urgent that decisive measures be adopted now," he wrote in 1875, "because the matter gets worse and worse by a delay that brings no compensating advantage." The "experiment" of Negro suffrage had proved conclusively the need for disfranchisement: "the incompatibility on a footing of equality is a fact that cannot be brought in doubt; it cannot either be doubted that the negro can be made a good and useful member of society under proper control, as past history abundantly proves."³

After the successful campaign in South Carolina against Radicals and Negroes in 1876, during which the "party of redemption" had solicited Negro votes, the Charleston News and Courier declared that Negroes were utterly incapable of understanding the workings of republican institutions.⁴ Six years later, seeing no improvement in

²Carrollton West Alabamian, May 5, 1875.

³"The Troubles in the South," Southern Magazine, XVI (1875), 518.

⁴November 10, 1876.

the political capacity of the black race, this journal pronounced the experiment in Negro suffrage a failure.⁵

H. H. Chalmers, writing in 1881, stated that the enormous potential Negro vote under existing laws would in the future afford a field for the arts of the demagogue and the briber such as the world had never seen, and predicted that if something was not done the whole of Southern politics would take on a rotten cast.⁶ For "reform and honesty's sake," Chalmers recommended establishing tests and standards of education and intelligence to disfranchise the mass of Negroes and to safeguard the purity of Southern government.⁷ In 1882, the Baton Rouge Capitolian Advocate looked forward to the restoration of "purity" to the ballot.⁸ The Houston Chronicle, following Cleveland's victory in 1884, demanded the repeal of federal election legislation because, it seemed, Negro suffrage had replaced peace with rioting, and the laws were unconstitutional,

⁵Ibid., November 13, 1882.

⁶"The Effects of Negro Suffrage," North American Review, CXXXII (1881), 245.

⁷Ibid., 244-248. See also Alexander Winchell, "The Experiment of Negro Suffrage," North American Review, CXXXVI (1883), 119-134.

⁸December 11, 1882. This journal thought the white primary might purify politics. See ibid., August 30, 1882.

anyway.⁹ The New Orleans Picayune in 1887 hopefully anticipated the day when it should be unnecessary to bribe or bulldoze Negro voters, "when the white man is to have all that he asks for, . . . because it belongs to him."¹⁰

The following year, in 1888, the Sunny South argued that experience proved that unless universal suffrage were abandoned free government would come to an end.¹¹

Senator John T. Morgan of Alabama, representing a bold Southern position, appealed to the nation in 1888, two years before the enactment of the "Mississippi Plan," to accept practical disfranchisement. If public opinion refused to sustain law, it could not be effective, the Senator proclaimed. "This is especially true when such laws demand the humiliation of the white race or the admission of the Negroes to a dangerous participation, as a race, in the affairs of our government."¹² Believing that democracy was suited to whites only, Senator Morgan advocated that laws to the contrary be broken, especially

⁹December 30, 1884.

¹⁰October 14, 1887.

¹¹January 28, 1888.

¹²"Shall Negro Majorities Rule?" Forum, VI (1888), 591.

since nothing good had come to either race from them. The effect of Negro suffrage, he said, was "only to neutralize the same number of white votes that would otherwise be cast with reference to the general welfare and prosperity of the country."¹³ Congress could do nothing to change the situation; outside pressure would only harm the Negro race; the South should, therefore, use "whatever means" were necessary to disfranchise the Negro.¹⁴

Prominent Southerners who denied that Negroes were being deprived of the suffrage were not lacking. In 1879 Senators L. Q. C. Lamar of Mississippi and Wade Hampton of South Carolina discussed in the North American Review the issue of white interference with Negro voters. No one, Lamar asserted, desired more than the Southerner "to see the negro elevated, civilized, made a useful and worthy element in our political life." There was, to be sure, "a natural tendency on the part of the former masters, still in possession of the land, to use an almost absolute authority and to develop the new freedman according to their own idea of what was good for him."¹⁵ But

¹³Ibid., 592-593.

¹⁴Ibid., 593-595.

¹⁵"Ought the Negro To Be Disfranchised? Ought He To Have Been Enfranchised?" North American Review, CXXVIII (1879), 232.

Democrats meant to train freedmen in politics. In the meantime, Lamar explained, Negro voters supported their former masters as blindly as they had once followed the Radicals.¹⁶ Lamar predicted that when Southern whites began to divide on political questions, Negroes would do likewise, and they would find whites on all sides to enlighten and influence them.¹⁷ Hampton agreed that Southern Democrats, instead of disfranchising Negroes, were giving them intelligent direction to bring them into political alliance with the whites.¹⁸ As Negroes became more intelligent they would naturally gather behind native white and Conservative leaders: "This is the inevitable tendency of things as they now stand at the South, and no extraneous pressure can change a result which is as sure and fixed as any other natural law."¹⁹

James G. Blaine, debating with Lamar and Hampton, challenged the claim of his opponents that Negroes in the South exercised the right of franchise undisturbed.

¹⁶Ibid., 233.

¹⁷Ibid., 235.

¹⁸Ibid., 240.

¹⁹Ibid., 241.

So long as the negro vote was effective in the South in defeating the Democracy, the leaders of that party denounced and opposed it. They withdrew their opposition just at the moment when, by fraud, intimidation, violence, and murder, free suffrage on the part of the negro in the South is fatally impaired; by which I mean that the negro is not allowed to vote freely where his vote can defeat and elect.²⁰

Former Confederate Governor Z. B. Vance of North Carolina implied that Negroes would be permitted to exercise the franchise so long as they voted as the whites dictated. Writing in 1884, Vance warned that as long as the Negro continued to follow blindly either outsiders or renegade elements of selfish white men, and refused "to identify himself with the property and intelligence of the section where he lives, his usefulness as a factor in the public prosperity will be greatly impaired, and he will be an element of danger to the welfare of society."²¹ Vance demanded that Negroes record their submission by their vote, or be disfranchised.

Despite protestations that Negro voters were undisturbed, critics of the South viewed the radical decline in the number of votes cast by Negroes as evidence of the

²⁰Ibid., 282.

²¹"The Future of the Negro," North American Review, CXXIX (1884), 86.

violation of the Fifteenth Amendment in the South. Alfred H. Colquitt of Georgia answered them in 1887 by denying, as Lamar had done eight years before, that the South was antagonistic toward the Negro voter. The declining vote he attributed to a loss of interest in politics, delinquency in taxes which barred Negroes from voting, the Southern labor system, and the great distance to polling places characteristic of rural country.²²

Unlike Southerners writing for Northern publications, the editor of the Sunny South was prepared to admit the truth of Blaine's allegation that the whites controlled the Negro vote by intimidation and violence. He rejected, however, the notion that the letter of the law should be respected and that public questions should be determined by majority vote. Because such a course was fraught with danger to civilization "a free ballot and a fair count" was unacceptable to the South:

It would seem that intimidation or bribery--bad as either confessedly is--is unavoidable. If the Conservatives cannot rule numbers--and in few communities is it the case that they can--they must assert their saving power in some other way. States have been saved in the past by men who carried out their plans in the face of the few righteous who denounced their ways as demoralizing, and in spite of the many who were ever ready to complain of any invasion of the freedom of the franchise.²³

²²"Is the Negro Vote Suppressed?" Forum, IV (1887), 268-278.

²³July 28, 1888. See also Baton Rouge Capitolian-Advocate, August 12, 1882.

The Charleston News and Courier, agreeing with the Sunny South, boasted that patriotic white men controlled South Carolina by depriving Negroes of the franchise. The decline in the gubernatorial vote from 170,000 in 1876 to only 33,154 in 1886 was, the News and Courier observed, no accident; it was a result of white political mastery of South Carolina's Negroes.²⁴

George W. Cable was not persuaded either that the South had refrained from interfering with Negro suffrage or that the "experiment" was a failure and ought to be terminated. Cable asserted that whenever the Negro had been given a chance he had proven his worth, especially in the schools.²⁵ Only where liberties had been "bitterly fought and successfully nullified throughout reconstruction days, have they since been unlegalized, condemned, and freely proclaimed to have been fairly tried and found

²⁴December 26, 1890. The News and Courier had stated on July 22, 1882 that "finesse and stratagem" were necessary to convert a minority into a majority to prevent the return of the horrors of Radicalism. In this way the Republican vote was reduced from 91,870 in 1876 to 13,740 in 1888, and the Negro was eliminated as a factor in South Carolina politics. See George B. Tindall, South Carolina Negroes, 1877-1900 (Columbia, S. C., 1952), 73.

²⁵"A Simpler Southern Question," Forum (1888), 394-395.

wanting."²⁶ But Negro suffrage had never been fairly tried in any ex-Confederate state.²⁷ "Must the average mental and moral caliber of the whole negro race in America equal that of the white race, before any negro in a Southern state is entitled to civil and political standing?"²⁸ The greater part of the wealth and intelligence of the South had opposed Negro suffrage, Cable said, and "held out sincerely, steadfastly, and desperately against it and for the preservation of unequal public privileges and class domination."²⁹

To bring about the practical disfranchisement against which Cable struggled, trickery was employed. Polling sites were chosen at great distances from Negro communities; lists of colored voters "lost"; polling places changed without notice, or proposed changes promised and not made; ballot boxes stuffed and the count manipulated; and bribery practiced. To these methods were added state control of local government to undercut Negro majorities, poll-tax

²⁶Ibid., 395-396.

²⁷Ibid., 397. Cable quoted a Governor of Alabama as saying that what he was interested in was not a "free ballot and fair count" but a "fair ballot and a free count," ibid., 403.

²⁸Ibid., 403.

²⁹Ibid., 397.

requirements, disfranchisement for being convicted of petty larceny or publicly whipped, elaborate and confusing registration schemes, and complication of balloting.³⁰

A Virginia "Readjuster" charged in 1882:

By a system of trickery, through disqualifications for petty offenses, and requiring the payment of a head tax as a prerequisite to voting, and using every means to prevent its payment, they [the Conservatives] had virtually disfranchised the negro, and by a system of frauds in the counting and certifying of returns they had guarded against any accidents resulting from his casting a vote. The system was too complete to require any violence.³¹

After less than a quarter-century of Negro suffrage, containing less than a decade when the Negro vote amounted to much, during which the Negro seldom voted without interference or had his ballot fairly counted, and before Negroes born five years after the War were old enough to vote, the South began to disfranchise the Negro by constitutional enactment. By the spring of 1890 it was well known that in the Mississippi constitutional convention to meet later in the summer, the "overshadowing question" would be that of suffrage. Whites in other Southern states

³⁰Paul Lewinson, Race, Class, and Party: A History of Negro Suffrage and White Politics in the South (New York, 1932), 65.

³¹H. H. Riddleberger, "Bourbonism in Virginia," North American Review, CXXIV (1882), 425; cited by Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 26.

agreed that this issue was of paramount importance. The history of the last twenty-five years had emphasized the fact that it was "extremely difficult to maintain republican government where ignorance predominates or at least holds the balance of power." To enfranchise the Negroes had been a blunder "worse than a crime," and it had been a constant strain to preserve decent government. "Our prosperity, our safety lies in pure and honest government, and this can be secured only through intelligent and honest voters."³² If the Negro were taken out of politics sectionalism would decline and the people of North and South would make up one community again.³³ Southerners expected the Mississippi Convention to be "a lighthouse, a beacon to guide other states" in a movement to save both whites and Negroes from "Republican conspirators" in Congress who sought to place "Southern states under the domination of their negro population."³⁴ Thus Mississippians had "undertaken to solve the problem of the age as far as America is concerned."³⁵

The Mississippi constitutional convention acted with the avowed intent of promoting good government, peace, and

³²Sunny South, April 5, 1890.

³³Ibid., April 26, 1890.

³⁴New Orleans Picayune, August 12, 1890.

³⁵Ibid., August 13, 1890.

order. The chairman of the convention, in initiating the move to disfranchise Negroes, asked, "Who knows better than the gentlemen before me what is the occasion and the object of this solemn assembly?"³⁶ "You are confronted by a colossal fact which cannot be obscured by the clouds of maudlin sentiment of pseudo philanthropy," he continued. Noting the existence in Mississippi of two "distinct and opposite types of mankind," he posed the problem of "how it shall be arranged so that we may live harmoniously." Reminding Negroes of their good friends, the whites, he explained how God had made each race desire to control the other but had given the white race the advantage, since white rule "always meant prosperity and happiness, prosperity and happiness to all races." White rule, therefore, "may be said to be a law of God."³⁷

The delegates, receiving the signal for which they had been waiting, provided in Article XII, Sec. 244 of the Constitution that every elector shall "be able to read any section of the Constitution of this State; or he shall be able to understand the same when read to him,

³⁶Mississippi Constitutional Convention, 1890, Journal (Jackson, 1890), 9.

³⁷Ibid., 10.

or give a reasonable interpretation thereof."³⁸ Thus minor officials in local communities received authorization to maintain white rule by interpreting the Negro electorate out of existence.

Five years after Mississippi initiated the movement to exclude Negroes from politics through constitutional devices, South Carolina incorporated the "Mississippi plan" into its constitution. Benjamin Tillman, the leader in the disfranchising convention, readily admitted that South Carolinians mastered the blacks by shotguns. Under his leadership most eligible Negroes were prevented from voting for delegates to the convention. Whites hoped that the new constitution would make fraud alone sufficient to disfranchise blacks, though Tillman himself perceived that force remained the ultimate arbiter in white supremacy politics in South Carolina.³⁹

In 1902 Virginia joined the list of states disfranchising Negroes "legally." The Virginia movement was hurried by the fact that in 1898, in Williams V. Mississippi, the United States Supreme Court had upheld the Mississippi prototype of the constitution Virginians had in mind.⁴⁰

³⁸Ibid., 676.

³⁹Simkins, Pitchfork Ben Tillman, 285-309.

⁴⁰Wynes, Race Relations in Virginia, 52-67; Morton, The Negro in Virginia Politics, 149-152.

The author of the disfranchising clause of the Virginia constitution, Carter Glass, remarked:

Discrimination! Why, that is precisely what we propose; that, exactly, is what this convention was elected for--to discriminate to the very extremity of permissible action under the limitations of the Federal Constitution, with a view to the elimination of every Negro voter who can be gotten rid of, legally, without materially impairing the numerical strength of the white electorate. . . . It is a fine discrimination, indeed, that we have practiced in the fabrication of this plan.⁴¹

In addition to South Carolina and Virginia, five other Southern states followed Mississippi's lead between 1895 and 1910; the others continued to rely on statutory methods to bar Negroes from the polls. The requirements of the eight states with disfranchising constitutions were similar. They perpetuated certain provisions of the statutory codes. A poll tax or other taxes must be paid. Registration was to take place months in advance of elections, and a tax receipt must be presented. The ability to read and write, or to interpret the state or federal constitution, was a standard qualification. In addition, residence requirements were extended throughout the South, and the

⁴¹Virginia Convention Debates, 1901-1902, 3076-77, cited by Lewinson, Race, Class, and Party, 86.

list of crimes involving disfranchisement lengthened to include petty offenses to which Negroes seemed prone.⁴²

While disfranchisement was becoming an established system "spokesmen of the region assured themselves and the world at large that the South had taken its stand, that its position was immovable, that alteration was unthinkable."⁴³

Hilary A. Herbert in 1890 edited a cooperative work on the solid South to show the consequences of interference in the domestic affairs of the Southern states by reckless politicians. The burden of the argument was that federal intervention to protect the Southern Negro was revolutionary in its tendencies and bad for business.⁴⁴

The famous classical scholar, Basil Gildersleeve, two years later indirectly defended the solid South on the grounds that the grand principle of states' rights was "incarnate in the historical life of the Southern people."⁴⁵

⁴²Lewinson, Race, Class, and Party, 80-81.

⁴³C. Vann Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow (Revised ed., New York, 1957), 8.

⁴⁴Why the Solid South? or Reconstruction and Its Results. H. G. Turner, for example, writing on "Reconstruction in Georgia," pointed out the extraordinary increase in taxation under the Radicals, and declared that redemption was a victory of those who had always been masters over those who had always been servants. Ibid., 139.

⁴⁵"The Creed of the Old South," Atlantic Monthly, LXIX (1892), 81-83.

Southerners justified the subjugation of Negroes as inevitable. Everyone of deep thought, it was claimed, had foreseen this result. The African had been transported to America "as a form of cheap labor, by an imperious people." Notwithstanding the Negro's emancipation and enfranchisement, his was always a subservient and inferior race, and "the Southern people have made intelligence overpower numerical superiority and ignorance."⁴⁶ Thus the civilization which "gave George Washington to the world now presents an unbroken front from the Potomac to the Rio Grande."⁴⁷ Dr. E. E. Hess of the Christian Advocate similarly extolled the victory of intelligence and virtue in the South. "If intelligence and property are to rule in the Pacific islands," he asked, "why not in American Commonwealths?"⁴⁸

W. J. Northern, ex-governor of Georgia, in an address in 1899 before the Congregational Club, in Boston, formerly the heart of enemy country, castigated the North for the

⁴⁶S. S. P. Patterson, "Municipal Primaries in the South," Sewanee Review, II (1894), 449-450.

⁴⁷Ibid., 451.

⁴⁸February 17, 1898. See also ibid., November 3 and December 1, 1898.

sin of Negro suffrage. "If the avenues to division and hate and blood and carnage, outrages and lynchings and violence and mobs" had been opened up through Negro suffrage, whose sin was it? "Not the sin of the South, but the sin of the North."⁴⁹ The way to end the shame of violence against Negro voters was to achieve the end sought, i.e., control, by legal disfranchisement. Since whites were unalterably opposed to Negroes' having a hand in government, and would employ violence to prevent it, why not let them use the engines of the state to exclude the blacks from political life? In this way turbulent groups acting without official sanction, and dangerous to peace and good order, would be dissolved by the state's assuming their function.

Thomas Nelson Page, looking back over the course of Southern history since emancipation, explained that the North was guilty of three gross errors in fostering Negro participation in politics: the assumptions that all men are equal, that the national government must sustain the Negro against his enemies, and that the interests of white

⁴⁹The Negro at the South: An Address Before the Congregational Club, Boston, Massachusetts, May 22, 1899 (Atlanta, n.d.), 16. See also Duke, Reminiscences, 242.

and black were opposed. But the South was victorious because it "has always maintained that these were fundamental errors."⁵⁰ The North, he believed, at length agreed and wisely surrendered the Negro to white guardianship.⁵¹ P. A. Bruce also was glad that the North had bowed to Southern demands, because the methods formerly used to suppress the Negro vote had been demoralizing, even though the South had believed that the mass of Negroes were as incapable of voting intelligently

as the mules and oxen that drew the plows and wagons; and that from a patriotic point of view, it was as obligatory to suppress their vote as it would have been to suppress the votes of all the Southern mules and oxen, had a Republican Congress, in the spirit of Caligula . . . seen proper to confer the suffrage on these animals.⁵²

Charles W. Dabney agreed that wise leadership had replaced "doubtful and sometimes criminal methods" of controlling the Negro vote "by Constitutional laws, based on the reserved power of the States to regulate the franchise," and that this settlement was universally recognized, North as well as South, as the final word on the subject.⁵³

⁵⁰The Negro: The South's Problem, 31-34.

⁵¹Ibid., 47.

⁵²P. A. Bruce, The Rise of the New South (Philadelphia, 1905), 448.

⁵³Dabney, The Meaning of the Solid South, 3.
See also Duke, Reminiscences, 415.

The exclusion of Negroes from the body of the electorate was supposed to be followed by many beneficial consequences. Peace and good order; friendship and a spirit of mutual helpfulness between the races; continued and improved education for the Negro; his increase in prosperity; honest and efficient government, untouched by partisanship and demagoguery--all these were momentarily awaited now that a great evil in Southern society had been ended.

Governor J. M. Stone of Mississippi was pleased to announce the imminent suppression of lawlessness in the South, following the removal of the cause, Negro suffrage. Inharmonious relations between the races, he said, were due largely to political causes, which, in Mississippi, "happily, are rapidly diminishing under the operation of the suffrage clause of the State Constitution of 1890, which places an educational qualification upon the elective franchise."⁵⁴ Since enormous Negro majorities had been eliminated, lawlessness was subsiding, and there was no reason to believe it would reappear. Governor Stone further predicted that caste prejudice, which still obstructed

⁵⁴"The Suppression of Lawlessness in the South," North American Review, CLVIII (1894), 502.

just administration of criminal jurisprudence, would also gradually decline.⁵⁵

Other optimists went further than Governor Stone, and looked forward to the end of one-party dominance in the South. The solidarity of whites, having achieved the purpose of preventing "Negro domination," would disintegrate under the pressure of divergent white interests hitherto submerged in the face of the great evil. The horrors of the "possibility of that 'social equality' of the blacks which for so long a time has filled the judgment of the clearest intellects" no longer would prevent the development of a two-party South.⁵⁶

Those concerned with a more just appreciation of Southern history also believed that "with the disappearance of the race question from politics an enormous advance would be made toward the calm and dispassionate view of past events, which alone is worthy to be dignified by the name of history."⁵⁷

⁵⁵Ibid., 503.

⁵⁶B. J. Ramage, "The Dissolution of the Solid South," Sewanee Review, IV (1896), 502.

⁵⁷United Confederate Veterans' Historical Committee, "Southern History," in "Proceedings of Charleston Reunion," Confederate Veteran, VII (1899), 248.

Negroes were confidently expected to benefit from disfranchisement, because their welfare was "contingent upon the supremacy of the forces of intelligence and property."⁵⁸ Since whites possessed "ninety-nine one-hundredths of the culture and nineteen-twentieths" of the property, to them belonged the South's government. If the Negro were the Southerner's ward and Negro suffrage in the white man's hands, and if these things ought to be so, as the whole country believed, "then in God's name and in all candor," the Reverend Edgar G. Murphy asked, "why may we not say so?"⁵⁹

A minority of Southerners recognized that opposition to Negro equality had unfortunate consequences for Southern whites themselves. Political thought, they realized, became so hedged in by commitment to white supremacy that free play of the intellect could not be tolerated. Walter Hines Page believed that the South's political energy was spent in preventing electoral equality

⁵⁸Edgar Gardner Murphy, The White Man and the Negro at the South (n.p., 1900), 27. See also Charles B. Galloway, The South and the Negro (New York, 1904), 10.

⁵⁹Murphy, The White Man and the Negro at the South, 35. The Rev. Murphy did not want the intelligent Negroes disfranchised, ibid., 28-29.

for Negroes, leaving no vigor for other tasks. Thus "commonplace men whose equipment was an equipment of traditions became the natural public leaders, when no new life and no new thought had play."⁶⁰ William P. Trent, too, criticized the dead uniformity in the thought of his region. Southern people failed to recognize the transcendent importance of criticism "to the accomplishment of political and economic reforms."⁶¹ He complained especially of the "despotic sway of party principles" which had brought it to pass that the section which had produced Washington and Jefferson had not recently produced a politician above mediocrity. "It has put mountebanks into the gubernatorial chair, and stained the judicial ermine with homicidal blood," Trent charged.⁶² A decade earlier George W. Cable had shown the cramping effects of white supremacy in political thought. Southern propagandists, he wrote, contented themselves with the assumption that Negroes, supported by a large class in the North, wanted Negro supremacy. When challenged, these apologists remained silent until

⁶⁰"The Last Hold of the Southern Bully," Forum, XVI (1893), 304.

⁶¹"Tendencies of Higher Life in the South," Atlantic Monthly, LXXVII (1897), 769.

⁶²Ibid., 51-52.

someone asked a subordinate question: "Is the negro contented and prosperous? Is he allowed to vote? Is his vote fairly counted? Has he all his civil rights? Are outbreaks due to political causes? Then their answers are abundant again."⁶³ The white supremacist, Thomas Nelson Page, believed that the Negro question absorbed the energies of the people, and excluded consideration of every other question,⁶⁴ and P. A. Bruce was saddened that the maintenance of white supremacy, of which he too was a champion, contributed to the decline in political knowledge in the South.⁶⁵

Newspaper editors, powerful defenders of white supremacy and leading instruments in the impoverishment of Southern political thought, also occasionally became disturbed over the tyranny to which the citizen was subjected. The editor of the New Orleans Picayune, for example, declared:

The absolute necessity of maintaining the supremacy of the Democratic party in these States has made men submissive to the form of party management which has deprived the Democracy of the power of self-direction. Self perpetuating committees, rings and

⁶³"A Simpler Southern Question," Forum, VI (1888), 399.

⁶⁴"A Southerner on the Negro Question," North American Review, CLIV (1892), 26.

⁶⁵Rise of the New South, 446.

cliques have captured the party machinery and rendered popular nominations well nigh impossible. This is the new danger with which . . . the Southern people have to deal.⁶⁶

Thus unscrupulous party managers took advantage of the need to maintain political solidarity, knowing "that the rank and file of the party will endure a great deal before they will venture to abandon the organization which stands between them and the Africanization of the State."⁶⁷

The Sunny South, like the Picayune, complained of the disposition to denounce any one having the hardihood to condemn any party act. "The lash, wielded not by the best, but often by the worst men, is applied without mercy or stint to all who are forced by conscientious convictions to refuse obedience."⁶⁸ The Charleston News and Courier worried that in depriving Negroes of the suffrage the South had invented rules which operated against white people who should have that right; but, the journal warned in 1900, the danger from "even a negro minority in the hands of desperate white men is in effect as bad as a negro majority under the control of negro or carpet-bag leaders."⁶⁹

⁶⁶July 18, 1887.

⁶⁷Ibid., August 3, 1887.

⁶⁸September 8, 1888.

⁶⁹November 9, 1900.

* * *

How was the South able to get away with violating the Fifteenth Amendment and reversing the course of events launched by the Radicals in 1866? Actual or threatened intervention by the Federal Government in Southern politics did indeed delay formal disfranchisement of the Negroes until Mississippi acted in 1890. Yet the truth was that the Federal Government had begun very soon after the Negro was enfranchised a long retreat in the face of Southern determination to restore white supremacy. By the end of the century public opinion in the nation had been conditioned to accept what a young Northern scholar, subsequently a distinguished constitutional historian, called "the false operation of certain laws that appear to have been drawn up with exceeding candor and indiscriminate fairness."⁷⁰ Republicans relinquished the Negro problem as a party question because they had come to believe "that domination by the ignorant blacks of the Gulf States is something to be dreaded."⁷¹

⁷⁰Andrew C. McLaughlin, "Mississippi and the Negro Question," Atlantic Monthly, LXX (1892), 828.

⁷¹Ibid., 828. For an excellent account of platform pledges of the Republican party, and of its diffident attempts, relatively easily checked by the alliance of Northern and Southern Democrats, to enact a Federal election law or "Force Bill" to protect the Southern Negro electorate, see Edward P. Clark, "The Solid South Dissolving," Forum, XXII (1896), 263-274. See also Vincent P. De Santis, Republicans Face the Southern Question: The New Departure Years, 1877-1897 (Baltimore, 1959).

A year after the Compromise of 1877 James Parton, while dismissing notions of racial inequality, said that the "cruelest stroke ever dealt the Negro" other than enslavement "was hurling him all unprepared into politics."⁷² Eight years later, in 1886, a disappointed radical noted that a "pall of good feeling" toward the South had spread over the country because of "race malice in the North."⁷³ Lyman Abbott, formerly an energetic champion of Negro suffrage, said: "We have tried the experiment of giving the Negro suffrage first and education afterward, and bitterly has the country suffered from our blunder."⁷⁴ The liberal Republican Moorfield Storey doubtless spoke for a large segment of the educated North in defending Negro suffrage while acquiescing in its denial: "We of the North perhaps wisely have left the negro to assert his

⁷²"Antipathy to the Negro," North American Review, CXXVII (1878), 491.

⁷³Eugene Marechal Camp, "Our African Contingent," Forum, I (1886), 570. Negroes hoped to counteract growing northern indifference by agitating through the medium of the Afro-American League, which they established in 1887. Emma Lou Thornbrough, "The National Afro-American League, 1887-1908," Journal of Southern History, XXVII (1961), 494-512.

⁷⁴Cited by Moorfield Storey, Negro Suffrage Is Not A Failure: An Address Before the New England Suffrage Conference, March 30, 1903 (Boston, 1903), 4.

rights, believing that 'who would be free himself must strike the first blow.'⁷⁵ The gradual gains the Negro was making encouraged Storey to refrain from urging federal interference in the belief that it would be "impossible long to deny their right to vote," for they would in time be readmitted to suffrage under the educational qualifications of the Southern constitutions and would be sought as allies by white political rebels who would "open wide the doors for their admission to full political rights."⁷⁶

Thus ended the phase which began in 1877 and which, as C. Vann Woodward has pointed out, was inaugurated by the withdrawal of federal troops, the giving up of the attempt to guarantee civil and political equality to the freedmen, and the acquiescence of the North in the South's demand that the Negro's status be left to the disposition of the Southern white people.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, as Storey's views indicated, the American people had perhaps postponed rather than abandoned the burdensome struggle to realize more perfectly the democratic ideal.

⁷⁵Ibid., 17.

⁷⁶Ibid., 17.

⁷⁷The Strange Career of Jim Crow (Rev. Ed., New York, 1957), 6.

PART III

EDUCATION

CHAPTER VIII

CONTROL OF EDUCATION DURING RECONSTRUCTION

After emancipation Negroes of all ages and degrees of intelligence displayed unrestrained eagerness for education and made remarkable efforts to learn, flocking to schools wherever established. They hungered for the intellectual stimulation withheld during slavery, or perhaps imagined that equality with whites could be speedily attained through book learning. They all knew that education was a major hallmark of the white man's civilization and its possession a requirement for political and social progress.

To satisfy the freedman's educational needs, Northern teachers pressed into the South behind advancing Federal armies and founded schools in towns and on plantations. By 1869 nearly ten thousand of these teachers were engaged in dispelling slavish ignorance and uprooting obsequious habits from the minds and characters of erstwhile slaves.¹ They were supported by seventy-nine freedmen's aid societies

¹Henry Lee Swint, The Northern Teacher in the South (Nashville, 1941), 3. The Western Freedmen's Aid Society sent teachers into Chattanooga behind the Union Army, and a party of Northern teachers moved into Charleston as Beauregard retreated. See Gilbert E. Govan and James W. Livingood, "Chattanooga under Military Occupation, 1863-1865," Journal of Southern History, XVII (1951), 23-47, and Elizabeth G. Rice, "A Yankee Teacher in the South," Century Magazine, XL (1901), 151-154.

or commissions and educational associations, such as the American Missionary Association, the Freedman's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church (North), and the New England Freedmen's Aid Society, most of which had abolitionist roots. The reforming societies, in turn, received aid and encouragement from the Freedmen's Bureau. Besides establishing its own schools, the Bureau offered protection to the teachers of missionary and benevolent associations, supplied them with transportation and quarters, and met the cost of erecting or renting their school buildings. The Bureau's director, O. O. Howard, devoted more attention to the education of freedmen than to any other aspect of his work.²

Most of the Northern teachers were motivated by a religious or humanitarian desire to uplift the Negroes and to renovate the entire structure of Southern society. A Freedmen's Bureau inspector described the teachers as "a band of missionaries who have come from the Christian homes

²Swint, The Northern Teacher in the South, 3-15. In out-of-the-way Texas General Howard's agent, E. M. Gregory, organized Negro schools under the charge of teachers supplied by the American Missionary Society. Frederick Eby, The Development of Education in Texas (New York, 1925), 264. Between 1867 and 1869 the Bureau helped the American Missionary Society to the extent of approximately \$37,000 in the education of Alabama Negroes. Horace Mann Band, Negro Education in Alabama: a Study in Cotton and Steel (Washington, D. C., 1939), 83.

of the land--following the example of their Divine Master--going about doing good."³ Some of the "Yankee emissaries," guided by less worthy motives, sought health, financial returns from tuition, or, perhaps, political opportunities.⁴

Whatever their motivation, Northern teachers as a body openly challenged the caste system of the South. The first annual report of the New England Educational Commission for Freedmen in 1863 declared that its missionaries were to teach Negroes "to relinquish the habits and customs of slavery, and to learn the duties and responsibilities of free men."⁵ Edward L. Pierce, a Treasury Department agent among the freedmen of Port Royal, South Carolina, also pointed out in his reports of the same year how the Government united with missionary societies to undermine racial subordination:

³Cited in Swint, The Northern Teacher in the South, 43.

⁴Ibid., 53-57. If an occasional semi-literate Negro minister sought an income from the Freedmen's Bureau by opening a school, few of the missionary teachers could have been attracted by tuition from students at \$0.25 to \$1.25 per month. Vernon L. Wharton, The Negro in Mississippi, 1865-1890 (Chapel Hill, 1947), 45-46; Gilbert E. Govan and James W. Livingood, "Chattanooga under Military Occupation," Journal of Southern History, XVII (1951), 45. In Alabama some of the teachers got themselves promotion to the Radical legislature. Bond, Negro Education in Alabama, 95.

⁵First Annual Report of the Educational Commission for Freedmen with Extracts of Letters of Teachers and Superintendents (Boston, 1863), 10.

The reading of the English language . . . is being taught to thousands, so that whatever military or political calamities may be in store, this precious knowledge can never be eradicated. Ideas and habits have been planted, under the growth of which these people are to be fitted for responsibilities of citizenship, and in equal degree unfitted for any restoration to what they have been.⁶

In March, 1862, Pierce had exhorted a group of teachers and labor superintendents on board the steamer Atlantic, as they neared shore in the Sea Islands, that "never did a vessel bear a colony on a nobler mission, not even the Mayflower, when she conveyed the Pilgrims to Plymouth."⁷

Many of the Yankee teachers associated with Negroes and urged them to demand the rights of free men. Most of them were attached to the Republican party; a few organized Negroes politically for the "party of emancipation."⁸ The aggressive Quaker Cornelia Hancock militantly strove against the "violent rebels" of South Carolina. She denounced President Johnson for protecting the "secesh" from punishments they richly deserved, and excoriated officers of the Freedmen's Bureau for concessions to disloyal Southerners. She demanded that Negroes be given the franchise and protected in its exercise. Worst of all, she rowed across

⁶The Freedmen of Port Royal, South Carolina: Official Reports of Edward L. Pierce (New York, 1863), 323.

⁷"Freedmen at Port Royal," Atlantic Monthly, XII (1863), 298, cited by Swint, The Northern Teacher in the South, 161.

⁸Swint, The Northern Teacher in the South, 84-85.

Charleston harbor in the company of Negro soldiers.⁹ Although many of the Northern teachers were not so bold nor exasperating,¹⁰ still they acted on the dictum that the North could "have no permanent peace with the South but by Americanizing it, by compelling it, if need be, to accept the idea, and with it the safety of democracy."¹¹

Southern whites reacted sharply against Yankee schools for Negroes, because, as James Russell Lowell predicted in 1865, "if they must lose slavery, they will make a shift to be comfortable on the best substitute they can find in a system of caste."¹² The education of Negroes in an atmosphere of democracy during the fluid conditions after the war did indeed threaten to prevent the hardening of caste as a contradiction of emancipation. Schooling would prepare Negroes to function in politics like any other

⁹Cornelia Hancock, The South after Gettysburg: Letters 1863-1868 (edited by Henrietta Stratton Jaquette; New York, 1956), 195-210.

¹⁰See, for example, Calbraith B. Perry, Twelve Years among the Colored People (New York, 1884), 88-91, and Maria Waterbury, Seven Years among the Freedmen (Chicago, 1890), passim.

¹¹James Russell Lowell, Political Essays (Cambridge, Mass., 1871), 260. Lyman Abbott, executive secretary of the American Union Commission, declared that the slaveholding aristocracy must be destroyed and genuine democracy built up in its place. Ira V. Brown, "Lyman Abbott and Freedmen's Aid, 1865-1869," Journal of Southern History, XV (1949), 23.

¹²Lowell, Political Essays, 259.

enlightened citizenry and train them to fill those positions in the economic order for which they were individually capable. Native whites, therefore, haughtily ignored or insulted Yankee teachers and cast every obstacle in the way of Negro education.

Southerners refused to accept the Northern teachers as tenants, and, by threatening to burn out any family which offered them shelter, forced them to live in public buildings and churches.¹³ Storekeepers often refused to sell food to the teachers or charged them exorbitant prices. Even in churches the teachers met rebuff, and on the street they were liable to gross insult.¹⁴ A group of college students in Lexington, Virginia, habitually greeted a missionary teacher as that "damned Yankee bitch of a nigger teacher."¹⁵ Mobs of various sorts, including the Ku Klux Klan, attacked the freedman's mentors, whipped many of them, and coated others with tar and cotton. During the presidential campaign of 1868 persecution quickened, and following the Radical victory of that year Southerners launched a veritable

¹³Swint, The Northern Teacher in the South, 96-97. A Negro of Chambers County, Alabama, was allegedly killed for permitting a white teacher to room in his home. Bond, Negro Education in Alabama, 117.

¹⁴Swint, The Northern Teacher in the South, 95-98.

¹⁵Ibid., 96.

reign of terror against the missionaries.¹⁶ Maria Waterbury was forced to seek refuge in a railway car, as in a fortress, in Jackson, Tennessee, and was driven from community to community.¹⁷ Despised and insulted, teachers in North Carolina had "as much to undergo, as if they were in Turkey."¹⁸ A teacher in Bastrop County, Texas, was taken from his home at night, tied to a tree, and whipped nearly to death, and his school burned.¹⁹ Thirty-seven Negro schoolhouses were burned by Tennesseans in 1869; teachers were mobbed, whipped, and paraded about with ropes around their necks.²⁰ In February, 1871, Negroes assembled in Convention at Nashville complained of outrages against teachers in colored schools. Opposition was so relentless that practically all their schools, except in the large cities, were closed.²¹ In Mississippi and Alabama, Yankee teachers found it impossible to teach in

¹⁶Ibid., 99-109.

¹⁷Waterbury, Seven Years among the Freedmen, 50-54.

¹⁸Albion Tourgee, A Fool's Errand (edited by John Hope Franklin; Cambridge, 1961), 50.

¹⁹"Report of the State Superintendent of Public Education to the United States Bureau of Education, October 28, 1871," in Frederick Eby, ed., Education in Texas: Source Materials (Austin, Texas, 1918), 543-545.

²⁰Taylor, The Negro in Tennessee, 90, 180-181.

²¹Ibid., 101-102.

plantation country and were forced into the cities.²²

Cornelia Hancock believed that South Carolinians would be "glad if a consuming fire would come over the land and annihilate both the contrabands and their teachers."²³

Once the decision that Negroes were to be educated had been made by the Federal Government in cooperation with private agencies, and confirmed by the carpetbag governments, opposition to Negro education was gradually transformed into opposition to the "wrong" kind of education.²⁴ As a result, Southern women did not face antagonism as teachers of Negro children; they offered the kind of instruction designed to keep Negroes in their place.²⁵ Many white people decided that the best defense against revolutionary education was their own participation in Negro education. An Alabama editor declared in 1871 that it was the "South's interest to commit the growing Negro race to the guidance of intelligent, virtuous teachers," else the South would have

²²Waterbury, Seven Years among the Freedmen, 116, 130-135.

²³Hancock, The South after Gettysburg, 234-235.

²⁴General O. O. Howard of the Freedmen's Bureau declared that this qualified support of Negro education "may be called a new form of opposition." Report of the Commissioner of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands for the Year 1866 (Washington, 1866), 13.

²⁵Carrollton West Alabamian, May 31, 1871.

"Yankee teachers of the extreme radical school who would . . . indoctrinate their colored pupils with New England notions."²⁶ Ladies of a number of local churches in Montgomery promised to instruct Negroes in Sunday schools as soon as Northern teachers could be prevailed upon to depart.²⁷

The Southern teacher might also stem the tide of familism, socialism, and other isms brought from the North. Publicists urged native white women to enter the teaching ranks to roll back radicalism by instructing their charges in the ideals of the South.²⁸ Southern white teachers, whether or not they were conscious propagandists of caste, did not participate freely in the life of the Negroes, and trained students to "continue as slaves in spite of their nominal emancipation."²⁹ When black teachers were at last deemed safe within a system managed by whites, even they instructed students to think what white people expected Negroes to think.³⁰

Although effective opinion was unalterably opposed to the education of Negroes by revolutionaries, North or South, some native whites accepted the Negroes as free and

²⁶Ibid. See also Bond, Negro Education in Alabama, 117-118.

²⁷Swint, The Northern Teacher in the South, 122.

²⁸New Orleans Crescent, June 15, 1866; Fort Smith Herald, June 17, 1871.

²⁹Carter G. Woodson, The Mis-education of the Negro (Washington, 1933), 27.

³⁰Ibid., 23-24.

urged that they be assisted in developing a school system-- in separation from whites, to be sure, but a system decidedly evolutionary and ultimately destructive of caste. In 1866 the Texas Teachers' Convention declared:

The negro seems disposed to seek education. Let us aid him. In every neighborhood, on every plantation, and at all suitable places, let the negro, with the aid of the Southern people, build up schools. The negroes will contribute from their own labor and small resources. But white people must also help. In every way let the negro see that the Southern whites are his best friends. We must rise above the prejudices and avarices growing out of our past relations to the negro and recent political events and be just and magnanimous.

Resolved, That justice and humanity alike demand that the negro should be educated so as to understand his duties and his privileges as a freedman.³¹

A feeble handful of whites reasoned that the demands of justice required education for slaves now released from their bonds and advanced to a plane of equality with other citizens. A few Southerners thought that freedmen should have access to education because, uninstructed and free, they would constitute a grave danger to society; some argued that rudimentary training was necessary to equip them to perform the common labor to which nature had consigned them.³²

³¹Cited by Eby, The Development of Education in Texas, 265.

³²McConnel, Negroes and their Treatment in Virginia, 91-92; Bond, Negro Education in Alabama, 111-114.

Scattered individuals were so favorably disposed toward the new education that they rendered aid to the missionary societies. But to offer assistance "in the face of general prejudice existing in the communities where they live, has hitherto required a moral heroism, not possessed by all who in their hearts" were sympathetic.³³

The poor whites, no longer buttressed by slavery, opposed a policy which promised to obliterate distinction between them and the blacks.³⁴ But white supremacy propagandists were seldom of the poor class, and members of the upper classes were prone to excuse themselves by placing the blame for discrimination on their scrubby neighbors whose daily affairs brought them into contact with the even more submerged black folk. Though the poor whites did not elaborate a social philosophy nor control the government of the South, yet the more high-toned gentleman was ever ready to suggest that if it were not for the "red neck," "cracker," or "sandhillier" the Negro would find the South a happy country.

The majority of Southerners of all classes were in fact responsible for erecting barriers to the education of

³³General Assembly's Committee on Freedmen of the Presbyterian Church, Fifth Annual Report of the General Assembly's Committee on Freedmen of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, May, 1870 (Pittsburgh, 1870), 19.

³⁴McConnel, Negroes and Their Treatment in Virginia, 91-92; Taylor, The Negro in Tennessee, 177; Waterbury, Seven Years among the Freedman, passim.

Negroes.³⁵ Maria Waterbury, who came to Mississippi to elevate the freedmen as a "Yankee schoolmarm," encountered adamant resistance from every rank in society, from the planter of large affairs and his elegant wife down to the unkempt and ignorant "poor white trash."³⁶ "How strange it is!" said a Northern traveller on a Mississippi steamboat to Miss Waterbury, "These southern people use such splendid manners, and are so hospitable, but . . . if you attempt to teach a colored person, they'll have nothing to do with you, and wonder what you're down here interfering with 'our niggers' for."³⁷ A white woman of the 'trashy' sort, on the other hand, responded:

Ye's got a right smart skule yere, a mighty sight
o' niggers! Drefful pest, tu; orter be teeched.
'T ante no sin tu teeche 'em to reed, but dey's niggers,
an' ye must keep 'em under; min' an' keep 'em under.
.....

You all cum down yer' an' teeche dese black 'uns, but
who'll teeche my chillen? Dey needs tu l'arn tu reed
tu.³⁸

³⁵Daniel J. Whitener, "Public Education in North Carolina During Reconstruction, 1865-1876," in Fletcher M. Green, ed., Essays in Southern History (Chapel Hill, 1949), 73; Edward King, "The Great South," (Scribner's Monthly): "Glimpses of Texas--II," VIII (1874), 423-424; "Pictures from Florida," IX (1874), 1-31; "Notes on Kentucky and Tennessee," IX (1874), 148; McConnel, Negroes and their Treatment in Virginia, 92; Taylor, The Negro in Tennessee, 177.

³⁶Waterbury, Seven Years among the Freedmen, passim.

³⁷Ibid., 58-59.

³⁸Ibid., 106-107.

Those who objected most strongly to Negro schools, whether conducted by Northern or Southern schoolmarms, were committed to the Old South with a passion. This group was made up of persons who looked "with pride upon the past, with disdain upon the present, and with distrust into the future."³⁹ It was a formidable group when aroused by appeals to prejudice and passion.

The judgment of all classes that Northern teachers were either fanatics or knaves whose mission it was to sow tares of hate and evil in the minds of their Negro pupils was deeply embedded in the Southern mind. Years later when the Yankee teacher was only an unpleasant memory, a prominent Southerner who administered Northern money for Southern-controlled Negro education complained of the "disastrously kind" philanthropy which had pampered "vagabond mendicants" and had multiplied private schools instead of supporting public education under the supervision of the Southern states.⁴⁰ Thomas Nelson Page, also looking back from the vantage point of victory, commented that "the South regarded jealously any teaching of the Negroes which looked toward equality."⁴¹

³⁹Barnas Sears, cited in Charles William Dabney, Universal Education in the South, 2 vols. (Chapel Hill, 1936), I, 113.

⁴⁰Curry, Difficulties, Complications, Limitations Connected with the Education of the Negro, 12-13.

⁴¹Page, The Negro: The South's Problem, 82.

Judge Thomas Norwood condemned the carpetbag educators for teaching freedmen that their labor had enriched the master whose wealth in justice belonged to them alone, and that they were due all rights which others enjoyed, even the right to take in marriage the white man's daughter.⁴²

Booker T. Washington and his students witnessed an embarrassing example of the unleashing of hatred for the Yankee teacher. A Confederate veteran speaking on a program at Tuskegee threw aside his prepared address, after listening to the Negro Bishop John C. Dancy praise the New England teachers who had come South after the war, and declared to the audience:

I want to give you niggers a few words of plain talk and advice. No such address as you have just listened to is going to do you any good; it's going to spoil you. You had better not listen to such speeches. You might just as well understand that this is a white man's country, as far as the South is concerned, and we are going to make you keep your place. Understand that. I have nothing more to say.⁴³

By 1870 most of the Northern teachers had left the South. They had bridged the gap until the Radical governments could set up free public school systems. Their schools had

⁴²Norwood, Address on the Negro, 5.

⁴³Cited in Samuel R. Spencer, Jr., Booker T. Washington and the Negro's Place in American Life (Boston, 1955), 187-188.

enrolled only a small portion of the Negroes during a brief period,⁴⁴ but they served three commendable purposes. They initiated the education of freedmen, provided a nucleus for the development of the colored public school system, and established a number of colleges which became the chief source for Negro professionals, especially teachers.⁴⁵

* * *

The white-controlled governments of presidential Reconstruction displayed only the slightest inclination to educate freedmen. The Texas Constitution of 1866 specified that the public school fund be used "exclusively for the education of all the white scholastic inhabitants." This constitution also provided that the legislature might levy taxes for public education, and that such taxes paid by Negroes be used for educating "Africans and their children." Although the constitution stated that it should be a duty of the legislature to encourage schools among the Negroes, nothing of the sort was done by the government which followed.⁴⁶

⁴⁴W. E. B. Der Bois, Black Reconstruction: An Essay toward a History of the Part which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880 (New York, 1910, 1935), 648.

⁴⁵Brown, "Lyman Abbott and Freedmen's Aid," Journal of Southern History, XV (1949), 36-37; Bond, Negro Education in Alabama, 84-86, 94-95.

⁴⁶Eby, The Development of Education in Texas, 265-266.

The Johnson legislature in Florida also required freedmen to pay for their own education. Schools for Negroes were to be supported by a tax of one dollar upon all male persons of color supplemented by tuition to be collected from each pupil. The superintendent was to establish colored schools when the number of children in any county should warrant it, provided funds were sufficient to meet the expense.⁴⁷

With the enfranchisement of Negroes and the overthrow of the Johnson governments, Radical conventions in all the Southern states provided for the establishment of comprehensive free public school systems. F. J. Moses, Jr., Radical governor of South Carolina, said:

No greater eulogy can be written upon the reconstructed administration of government in South Carolina than that when it came into power it was a statutory offense against the law of the land to impart even the rudiments of a common school education to a South Carolinian, because, forsooth, he was black, while the reconstructed government has made it a statutory offense to hinder or prevent any child in the State, of whatever color, from obtaining a common school education. Nay, we have even gone further, and demanded by our Constitution, that their attendance at school be compulsory.⁴⁸

The carpetbag Superintendent of Education in Texas similarly expressed the flaming spirit of social revolution behind the Radical program to educate Negroes at public expense:

⁴⁷Du Bois, Black Reconstruction, 654.

⁴⁸Ibid., 651.

A civilization vitalized and energized by free school is our chief need, and the education of youth our primary duty. Let the community in its organized capacity provide the bread of knowledge for all its children, and leaven with intelligence the whole mass of society.

There is nothing we ought not to do, there is no effort we ought not to make; there is no sacrifice, whether of money or of prejudice, we ought not to yield, rather than allow a generation into whose hands the ballot and the government is gravitating, to remain unfitted for their duties and destiny.⁴⁹

The financial resources of the Southern states, though in considerable measure destroyed by the Civil War, and hard pressed to sustain the ordinary governmental expenses of reconstruction, offered the impoverished freedmen the means to support a more comprehensive system of education than they could otherwise establish. The few millions supplied by the United States Government through the agency of the Freedmen's Bureau combined with the gifts of interested Northern associations and the contributions of the Negroes themselves did no more than initiate and help along colored education.

Negroes and their Radical associates felt justified in requiring white property owners to contribute the greater share of the school expense. The Mississippi school report of 1873 stated:

⁴⁹Superintendent of Public Instruction E. M. Wheelock to Governor E. M. Pease, May 30, 1868, in Eby, Education in Texas: Source Materials, 481.

It is objected that a general tax compels white men of the state to educate the children of the Negro. But as the Negro forms a majority of the entire population of the state, and in an eminent degree a majority of the producing classes, as such classes of every population--the laborer, tenant and consumer--indirectly bear the burdens of taxation, it follows that an assessment upon the property of the state would be principally paid by the Negro and, therefore, the ground of complaint, if any, against a general tax is with the colored people and not with the white.⁵⁰

The establishment of free schools for Negroes constituted a serious long range attack upon caste, but the most significant attempt to overthrow at once the social structure of the South was the effort to integrate Negro and white children in the schoolroom. School integration was first attempted by Northern teachers who expected to bring the races together on a voluntary basis and thus initiate a peaceful revolution.

Johnson's inauguration was celebrated in Charleston, South Carolina, by the semi-integration of the city's Yankee schools. "The loyal white people . . . have shown that they are quite willing to let their children attend the same school with loyal blacks," although "no attempt to unite them in the same room or classes would have been tolerated," the New York Tribune optimistically commented March, 10, 1865.⁵¹ A school in Jacksonville, Florida, was opened by Northern

⁵⁰Du Bois, Black Reconstruction, 652.

⁵¹Ibid., 643.

teachers to children of both races with temporary success. But this school, like those in Charleston, was sustained by military force and conducted by outside teachers.⁵² The New England Freedmen's Aid Society promised to maintain no school from which pupils should be excluded because of race distinction, and imagined that the principle had been established in 1866.⁵³ But this attempt at racially mixed education was such a signal failure that the Society was hard pressed to show a handful of whites attending school with Negroes in such scattered places as Alexandria, Virginia, Raleigh, North Carolina, Columbus, Georgia, and Port Orange, Florida.⁵⁴ By January, 1868, the New England Freedmen's Aid Society implied defeat of its integration policy by noting that "prejudice still keeps the poor whites away from a school to which colored children are admitted."⁵⁵ General O. O. Howard's decision that the Freedmen's Bureau would erect and repair only those schools open to both races failed to help the missionaries effect the anticipated revolution.⁵⁶

⁵²Ibid., 653-654.

⁵³Freedman's Record, II (1866), 17-18.

⁵⁴Ibid., III (1867), 26, 70, 190.

⁵⁵Ibid., IV (1868), 3.

⁵⁶Ibid., 22; Freedmen's Bureau, Circular No. 30 (Washington, 1867).

In nearly every Southern state at the outset of Radical ascendancy the question of mixed schools was a matter of considerable debate and strong feeling. Alabama's Radical constitution provided for schools which all the children could attend free of charge. This provision was open to interpretation. The legislature in 1870 provided for separate schools except where unanimous consent of parents and guardians permitted racial mixing in the schools.⁵⁷ The Arkansas convention stipulated merely that all children were to receive gratuitous instruction, and the legislature adopted a "separate but equal" school law.⁵⁸ The Georgia convention adopted a vague clause providing free education for all children; again the legislature followed with "separate but equal" school legislation.⁵⁹ The Mississippi legislature in 1870 opened the schools of the state to all youths without distinction, but local authorities interpreted the law to permit separate schools with "equal advantages."⁶⁰ The

⁵⁷Stephen B. Weeks, History of Public Education in Alabama (Washington, 1915), 87.

⁵⁸Stephen B. Weeks, History of Public Education in Arkansas (Washington, 1912), 54, 115-116.

⁵⁹Dorothy Orr, A History of Education in Georgia (Chapel Hill, 1950), 182.

⁶⁰Edgar W. Knight, Public Education in the South (New York, 1922), 324.

constitution of Texas forbade discrimination, but ignored the question of segregated or integrated schools, causing hysterical conjectures as to the intentions of the Radicals.⁶¹ In South Carolina attempts to integrate the blind, deaf, and dumb school⁶² and the state university met dramatic failure. While the bust of John C. Calhoun looked down "on the change with astonishment," students at the University of South Carolina erased their names from book lists to prevent them from being next to Negro signatures, and, with the faculty, departed from the University upon the admission of Negroes.⁶³

In Louisiana, unlike the other states, segregated public schools were specifically prohibited.⁶⁴ A few schools, principally in New Orleans, inaugurated integration. Social ostracism was applied and violence flared.⁶⁵ The children of Lieutenant Governor P. B. S. Pinchback were escorted to a white school by a policeman, but run off after the policeman disappeared.⁶⁶ A white boycott of schools which admitted

⁶¹Eby, The Development of Education in Texas, 266.

⁶²F. B. Simkins and R. H. Woody, South Carolina during Reconstruction (Chapel Hill, 1932), 439-440.

⁶³King, "The Great South: The South Carolina Problem: The Epoch of Transition," Scribner's Monthly, VIII (1874), 156-158.

⁶⁴Edwin Whitfield Fay, History of Education in Louisiana (Washington, 1898), 101.

⁶⁵Knight, Public Education in the South, 331, 356-357, 394.

⁶⁶Du Bois, Black Reconstruction, 660.

Negroes was an effective means of combating integration. "To the 'you must!' of the law, the white man replied, 'I will not!'"⁶⁷ Nevertheless, integration was not completely defeated in New Orleans until the overthrow of "Negro government" following the election of 1876.⁶⁸

If W. E. B. Du Bois is right, as he almost surely is, Negroes in general wanted integrated schools. They desired the advantage of association with white children, and they wanted this proof of equality; segregation, as they well knew, was grounded upon a belief in the inequality of races. In addition Negroes realized that the expense of maintaining two school systems would weaken the quality of education.⁶⁹

Many Negroes spoke out for integration. In the South Carolina Constitutional Convention of 1868, J. A. Chestnut advocated mixed schools regardless of consequences. Dismissing the possibility of racial clashes, he expressed willingness to let whites suffer the hardship of being deprived of education if they stayed away on account of

⁶⁷King, "The Great South: Louisiana," Scribner's Monthly, VIII (1873), 27.

⁶⁸Louis R. Harlan, "Desegregation in New Orleans Public Schools during Reconstruction," American Historical Review, LIVII (1902), 663-675.

⁶⁹Du Bois, Black Reconstruction, 662-663. In Alabama Negroes hoped the threat of integration would assure their schools an equal share of public funds. Bond, Negro Education in Alabama, 93.

prejudice.⁷⁰ Negro leaders in North Carolina clamored for mixed schools for some years.⁷¹

Negroes often gathered in conventions to declare their support of school integration. In July, 1873, a meeting of Texas Negroes bluntly accused the whites of having set their faces in steadfast opposition to the Negroes' political, educational, and social progress, "with a blind spirit of malignant opposition not calculated to inspire us with either confidence or affection." The convention demanded the passage of the Civil Rights Bill and promised to agitate the question until guaranteed their rights. "We would far prefer to have received these boons as a voluntary offering from our white fellow-citizens," the convention declared. Unfortunately, Southern white men were determined to leave the colored people nothing to be grateful for, "as every right we enjoy has been forced from their grasp, in the face of stern opposition and openly expressed hatred." But the convention did not despair. It once again appealed for mutual cooperation "for the advancement of the interests of our state and the welfare of its citizens."⁷² A Montgomery

⁷⁰South Carolina Constitutional Convention (1868), Proceedings (Charleston, S. C., 1868), 642.

⁷¹Dabney, Universal Education in the South, I, 173.

⁷²"Colored Men's Convention, July 3-4, 1873," in Eby, Education in Texas: Source Materials, 581-584.

convention of July 8, 1874, demanded schools free to all, urgently requesting legislation to secure Negro rights and place them beyond the control of the "white man's party" or any other party.⁷³ In July, 1877, when the New Orleans School Board designated schools as white or colored, Negroes fruitlessly protested the decision.⁷⁴

In response to demands of Negroes and their friends for school integration the South argued that race relations, like nature's laws, were beyond the competence of legislation. If enacted, it could not be enforced or could be enforced only by a consolidated, tyrannical government contradicting the vision of the Founding Fathers. Both races, it was claimed, would suffer from mixed education, especially the white race, which would at once be corrupted in morals, and ultimately would be destroyed by mongrelization. In any case, Southerners would not submit. If Radicals wanted their precious philosophy of universal education to prevail, then they could save the public school system below the Mason-Dixon line only by conceding separate education of the races under the direction of local whites.

⁷³Carrollton West Alabamian, July 8, 1874.

⁷⁴Harlan, "Desegregation of New Orleans Schools during Reconstruction," American Historical Review, LXVII (1962), 672.

The white South was inclined to claim divine approval of its caste system, keeping a good conscience and throwing up an unassailable barrier to the schemes of infidels in the process. In the Arkansas constitutional convention of 1868, John M. Bradley demanded to know whether "in the name of God, in the name of your fathers and mothers, and of your sons who sleep in the graves of heroes"

you now prepare to thrust into the same common school with your child and mine, the children of the Negro. Will you endorse that monstrous instrument which prepares to take advantage of the necessities of widows, and of poverty-stricken men, who cannot afford to send their children elsewhere, to compel them to thrust these children, for three months in the year, among the offspring of a race whom God, by writing an indelible mark upon their head and foot and brain, had pronounced the social inferiors of your sons and daughters?⁷⁵

A Louisiana "poor man" addressing the "widows of Confederate dead" and white men of pure Caucasian blood asked:

Are you willing that your sons, your daughters . . . should be placed upon an actual level with the Negro race, which has been proven beyond a doubt to be the lowest in the scale of humanity, having done nothing in the history of the world to prove themselves a reasoning, inventive people, but have remained just as God made them--to be only hewers of wood and drawers of water.⁷⁶

⁷⁵Arkansas Constitutional Convention (1868) Proceedings (Little Rock, 1868), 660-661.

⁷⁶Quoted from the New Orleans Picayune, in Carrollton West Alabamian, April 20, 1870.

Similarly, the West Alabamian denounced the mongrelizing school policy of "crazy fanatics" ignorant of the law of racial inequality.⁷⁷

William H. Ruffner, Superintendent of Education of the Richmond Public Schools, argued that social laws like physical laws were immune to legislative direction. "An act of Congress requiring the South poles of all magnets to attract each other," he said, "would not be a whit more absurd than one requiring education to be conducted on a race mixture in the late slave states." True, civil rights were conventional and subject to alteration by legislation, but "natural laws being inherent and divine, can be controlled only by being obeyed."⁷⁸ Some people wondered why Congress did not seek to regulate rainfall or the movements of winds and tides.

During the debate on the Civil Rights Bill in 1874, a Georgian proclaimed that color was unaffected by legislation, and a Tennessean asserted that the states had the authority to keep the races apart in schools and elsewhere, because God had "stamped the fiat of his condemnation" upon

⁷⁷Carrollton West Alabamian, June 1, 1870.

⁷⁸"Co-education of the White and Colored Races," Scribner's Monthly, VIII (1874), 86.

mixed marriages, which brought "decay and death."⁷⁹

The clearest indication that race mixing was contrary to the laws of God and nature, Southerners maintained, was the fact that miscegenation inevitably resulted in the replacement of the white race by contemptible mulattoes. Ruffner called upon the "profound thinkers" of the day to "rebuke the vulgar spirit of miscegenation in all its forms."⁸⁰ General T. M. Logan declared that white fear of amalgamation of the races was the strongest reason for opposition to mixed schools. Lest that happen, he said, the South was prepared to exterminate the weaker race.⁸¹

Aside from intermarriage and its consequences, Southerners argued that association of the races in the schoolhouse would debase the Anglo-Saxon's morals, because Negroes moved on a lower moral plane than whites. Ruffner refrained from giving details about the Negroes' morals "only in kindness to an amiable people." He thought that "well founded moral objections, to say nothing of physical peculiarities," made attempts to mix the races in schools,

⁷⁹Alfred H. Kelly, "The Congressional Controversy over School Segregation, 1867-1875," American Historical Review, LXIV, (1959), 553.

⁸⁰"Co-education of the White and Colored Races," Scribner's Monthly, VIII (1874), 90.

⁸¹"The Opposition in the South to the Free School System," Journal of Social Sciences, IX (1878), 95.

"which might otherwise be considered vain and foolish," in reality "base and malicious."⁸²

A most compelling reason offered in defense of separate schools was that strife always accompanied attempts to mix the races. This was true because the use of violence was in fact the effective means for controlling the Negro. Social strife would obviously not be caused by the Negroes, but by whites who would violently resist school integration, or any other kind of integration. The New Orleans Crescent, in consequence, could not find language severe enough for persons who excited the colored people to senseless ambition which "will finally prove disastrous to those who kindle it, and to those within whom it burns."⁸³ Wise men did not prate about liberty and equality, knowing social turbulence to be the result, but attained their goals in a practical way, i.e., by means of segregated education.

White supremacists threatened to destroy the new systems of public schools rather than see them integrated. The demand of the Alabama press to abolish public schools in the event of the passage of Sumner's Bill was practically

⁸²Ruffner, "Co-education of the White and Colored Races," Scribner's Monthly, VIII (1874), 88.

⁸³New Orleans Crescent, October 18, 1867; see also Carrollton West Alabamian, October 7, 1874.

unanimous. The "little dirty, greasy, filthy, odoriferous descendants of Ham" would be educated, if at all, by their parents, not at white expense and in the same schools with Anglo-Saxon children. Whites would tear down with their own hands school buildings, sooner than submit. If the bill became law, one editor said, the question would be "How to get rid of the Negro race."⁸⁴

The Southerner argued that mixing of the races in schools would inevitably destroy the public schools. The system in the ex-slave states would last "just as long as would be required to go through the forms of law needed to destroy it." Everybody knew it, black and white, "and, therefore, the blacks do not desire mixed schools, and the real friends of universal education do not desire it whatever may be their political theories." Such a law would turn more than a million and a half children out of school. What man could bear that responsibility?⁸⁵

Whether or not Negroes were willing to abandon the goal of integration in order to save the public school, their white Republican allies in the South were. The files

⁸⁴"Alabama Press on Civil Rights," in Carrollton West Alabamian, June 17, 1874.

⁸⁵Ruffner, "Co-education of the White and Colored Races," Scribner's Monthly, VIII (1874), 89.

of the New Orleans Republican between 1871 and 1874 demonstrate how Republican enthusiasm for mixed schools rapidly weakened. On July 8, 1871, the newspaper boasted that, despite the strongest assaults of its adversaries, schools in every parish and incorporated town in the state were open to children regardless of race. On September 16, 1873, the journal admitted that few Negro children had abandoned the "old rookeries which have been furnished them under the misnomer of schoolhouses" in order to mix with white children, but was proud that in many city schools white and colored children studied together in harmony. On August 16, 1874, the editor expressed his approval of the Civil Rights Bill then pending in Congress, but later that year discovered that "any act which enforces compulsory association becomes a violation of the principles of equality." Doubtless this retreat was a consequence of the Republican losses in the fall elections, losses allegedly caused by the Civil Rights Bill. On December 16, the Republican warned that the attempt to enforce social equality might raise the danger that "previous concessions may be reconsidered, and that freedmen may be even remitted and remanded to a state of prolonged probation." It was a notorious fact, the editor claimed, that the demand for race intermingling came from the mulatto

class only. Separate but equal facilities should be accepted in order to maintain the unity of the Republican party upon which universal suffrage depended. The next day, December 17, 1874, the Republican pretended ignorance of the moves and the motives of the integrationists:

The enactments were passed at a period when extreme expectations were indulged by persons who proposed to enact abstractions into practical effect. Those who acted upon that idea found its utter impracticability, and have withdrawn from authority and interference in our school affairs. The present school authorities have regarded any attempt at compulsory association of races as fraught with especial mischief and injury to the colored pupils, and calculated to drive the property holders to a repeal of the taxation upon which alone the children of color could expect any education at all.

Republicans in Louisiana, it appeared, preferred segregated education to none, and peace to turbulence.

Trustees of the Peabody Fund played an important role in cooperating with the South on this question. In a letter to the Louisiana State Superintendent of Schools, July 10, 1869, Barnas Sears, general agent of the Fund, expressed a willingness to help the state, "if the two races are placed in separate schools," but if the schools were attended by colored children alone, the Peabody Fund "must look particularly after the white children."⁸⁶ Later, in

⁸⁶J. L. M. Curry, A Brief Sketch of George Peabody and a History of the Peabody Education Fund Through Thirty Years (Cambridge, 1898), 61.

justification for helping white children only, Sears explained to the protesting Superintendent of Schools that his board had no objection to mixed education, but as the white people of Louisiana did, the Peabody Fund was compelled to offer assistance to the neglected whites only.⁸⁷ In 1877 the board of the Peabody Fund provided aid to the public school system, for the whites had "redeemed" the state and had established separate schools for the two races.⁸⁸ Despite their neutrality on the question of mixed schools, the trustees used their influence with Congress to defeat the mixed school clause of the Civil Rights Bill of 1875, because they believed public education in the South to be at stake.⁸⁹ Sears wrote to Robert C. Winthrop that he was able to say to Congress "that Negroes themselves think it best to have separate schools; that a delegation of colored preachers and a colored lawyer had just called on me in Memphis, expressing this view strongly."⁹⁰

⁸⁷Barnas Sears to R. M. Lusher, July 10, 1869, in the New Orleans Picayune, July 27, 1869.

⁸⁸Dabney, Universal Education in the South, I, 121.

⁸⁹Kelly, "The Congressional Controversy over School Segregation, 1867-1875," American Historical Review, LXIV (1959), 553-554.

⁹⁰January 8, 1874, in Curry, A Brief Sketch of George Peabody, 65.

From 1872 to 1875 a few congressional Radicals, notably Charles Sumner in the Senate and Benjamin F. Butler in the House, endeavored to secure the passage of a civil rights bill with a school integration clause. Despite repeated attempts to reinforce Southern integrationists with federal power, Sumner died before his bill could be enacted, and then it was barely more than a memorial to him, with the school clause deleted.⁹¹ As E. L. Godkin, who had objected to policemen's dragging "white men's children to colored schools in Louisiana,"⁹² said, "Indeed, it is a harmless bill."⁹³

Integration had thus failed on the individual, the state, and the national levels. Doubtless threats to end public education exerted great influence upon Northerners, and upon the Negroes too. The free school idea was then riding a strong groundswell of public sentiment; it appealed to millions as the sure guarantee of republican government. The injection into the voter lists of masses of ignorant Negroes, together with a flood of immigrants, powerfully

⁹¹Kelly, "The Congressional Controversy over School Segregation, 1867-1875," American Historical Review, LXIV (1959), 537-563.

⁹²Nation, VII (1868), 203.

⁹³Ibid., XX (1875), 141.

stimulated faith in public education. Should the South refuse to develop its public schools, a crowd of poor whites might join the Negro contingent and the foreign-born in an onslaught on republican institutions. Since the public school idea had far more adherents than Negro equality could muster, the choice was made in favor of public education--with segregation.

Perhaps the "separate but equal" provision for educating the Negroes was not altogether a defeat. Negro schools might otherwise have been quietly allowed to languish. The controversy over mixing of the races tended to force the South to promise equal facilities to Negroes in order to forestall national intervention. Although the promise was broken, Negro children were not excluded from the schools to the degree that their fathers were barred from the polls.

Once whites regained supremacy in state politics, they could set up two school systems radically different in effect upon white and Negro children. The purpose and effects of segregation in maintaining Negro subordination were so apparent that Southerners felt bound to defend the policy long after their victory over the Radicals. For example, Henry W. Grady stated in 1885 that the South, once it was assured that the school would "not be made the hot-bed of false and pernicious ideas, or the scene of unwise associations"

cordially supported Negro education. The blacks were perfectly happy in their own schools, indeed they "insist that the separation shall be carried further, and the few white teachers . . . supplanted by negro teachers."⁹⁴ The Georgian Gustavus J. Orr, president of the National Education Association, also boasted of the wisdom of separate schools for blacks, and the favor segregation found among them. In case Negroes might not agree, Orr reminded them that he would rather "see the whole educational system swept away" rather than accept the establishment of mixed schools.⁹⁵

An occasional hardy Southerner criticized segregation in education on the ground that it was a device to keep Negroes in servitude. By so doing he called upon himself opprobrium and exposed himself to reprisal. Lewis H. Blair was forced to resign from the Richmond Central Democratic Committee for writing in the New York Independent in favor of mixed schools. The New Orleans Picayune accused him of designing to overthrow the free school system, for he knew that the South would abolish public education rather than accept social equality.⁹⁶ Blair then published a book on

⁹⁴"In Plain Black and White: A Reply to Mr. Cable," Century Magazine, XXIV (1885), 912.

⁹⁵Cited in ibid., 913.

⁹⁶August 1, 1887.

the elevation of the Negro in which he wrote:

The necessity for the abandonment of separate schools is dual--physical and moral. The physical necessity is this: with our sparse population separate schools cannot supply a clientage numerous enough to secure good teachers, upon whom the efficiency of the public schools is absolutely dependent. . . .

The moral necessity is this: Separate schools are a public proclamation to all African or mixed blood [sic] that they are an inferior caste, fundamentally inferior and totally unfit to mingle on terms of equality with the superior caste. . . . Hence it follows that separate schools brand the stigma of degradation upon one-half of the population, irrespective of character and culture, and crushes their hope and self-respect, without which they can never become useful and valuable citizens. . . . when we make our implement of elevation, namely our public schools, simply a branding iron for stamping the letter "D," degraded, upon the foreheads of millions of black fellow-citizens, we deliberately tear up by the roots all our other efforts for their amelioration.⁹⁷

Edgar Gardner Murphy, executive secretary of the Southern Education Board, in an address to the National Education Association in 1903, delivered the white South's reply to such critics as Blair. The Southern population, Murphy said, was a population divided by the instinctive diversities of race, more fundamental than color. "The doctrine of race integrity, the rejection of the policy of racial fusion is, perhaps the fundamental dogma of southern life." This dogma of the segregation of races was approved and

⁹⁷The Prosperity of the South Dependent upon the Elevation of the Negro (Richmond, 1889), 47. Cited in Guion Griffis Johnson, "Southern Paternalism toward Negroes after Emancipation," Journal of Southern History, XXIII (1957), 488.

sustained by the masses of people, white and black, "as the elementary working hypothesis of civilization in our southern states." Under conditions where Negroes were in the majority,

the abandonment of the dual system of public education and the enforcement of a scheme of coeducation for the races would involve, not the training of the children of the weaker race in the atmosphere and under the associations of the stronger, but the attempted training of the children of the stronger race in the atmosphere and under the associations of the weaker.

Inevitably, Murphy concluded, segregation made Negro schools inferior. But the social and educational separation, by "preventing the absorption of the best negro life into the life of the stronger race," had created a representation of Negro leadership. "The very process which may have seemed to some like a policy of oppression has in fact resulted in a process of development." Although the white race should elevate the Negro race through some contact, the "point of helpful contact must not be placed among the masses of the young, and the leverage of interracial co-operation must not seek its fulcrum upon the tender receptivities and the unguarded immaturities of childhood."⁹⁸

⁹⁸"The Schools of the People," Journal of the Proceedings of the National Education Association, 1903 (Chicago, 1903), 129-131.

CHAPTER IX

ATTITUDES TOWARD NEGRO EDUCATION IN THE NEW SOUTH

Southerners did not gladly concede formal education to Negroes, but they did take pride in the day-to-day schooling the whole of white society gave to the inferior blacks, who, they believed, required the nurture of the stronger race. In the mists of the future Negroes might graduate to full independence, having been lifted out of the dark past by training at the foot of white masters, but to the Southerner it seemed more likely that they were destined to be forever wards. This belief had the inestimable virtue of at the same time flattering whites and permitting them in good conscience to deny Negroes education on an equal footing with themselves.

In stressing the educational value to the Negro of his living among advanced people, white men liked to recall the benefits of slavery. Thus the Sunny South castigated Frederick Douglass for morbidly railing "against the race to which he owes most of his blood and all of his culture" and for refusing to admit that progress made by the Negroes since emancipation was owing to the white man.¹ Judge J. Wofford

¹January 12, 1884.

Tucker thought that if the blacks had not been enslaved they would have been wasted in tribal wars, buried with dead kings, eaten at cannibal feasts, or left in cruel barbarism without religion and without hope.² The Rev. Dr. E. E. Hoss, editor of the Christian Advocate, agreed that slavery, "looked at in a large way . . . was a lifting force to the Negro race." The race may not have come very far on the one-thousand-year road of white civilization, but the whites continued to lead them along more rapidly than anyone could have hoped.³ Taking into account the time required to teach a whole race, Hoss predicted that the Negroes would remain under white instruction for an indefinite period. Yet the apprenticed Negroes ought to be thankful. "Compared with any other 10,000,000 Africans who ever lived, they stand in all things on an immense eminence."⁴

The Massachusetts-born Rev. A. D. Mayo, hoping to spur the South on to a final effort in the elevation of Negroes through formal education, pronounced the enfranchisement of ex-slaves "far more a compliment to the training of the colored people in the South than a vindictive political

²"Letter to the Editor," Christian Advocate, May 5, 1892.

³Christian Advocate, August 9, 1898.

⁴Ibid., December 29, 1894.

measure."⁵ But Mayo also noted that an entire literature had sprung up in which the excellence of the slaves was "duly magnified, sometimes to the extent that we suspect the author never heard of a respectable colored man who could read and write."⁶

Years earlier, Dr. Randolph Stevenson had asked the South's "defamers and Negrophilists of the North" who was it that took a race of people from their native jungles, where they "were but little removed from the gorilla," and in a mere two centuries had taught them what they had failed to learn in forty centuries. Slavery, far from being degrading, was actually a great school, else "How is it that its product, the Southern blacks, are so fit to discharge the duties of citizens?" But Stevenson would not admit that Negroes who might prosper under white restraint could rise higher under freedom.⁷

Bishop. T. U. Dudley of the Kentucky diocese of the Episcopal Church issued a call in 1885 to all Southerners to join in lifting the Negro race "by their personal contact

⁵The Reverend A. D. Mayo, The Opportunity and Obligation of the Educated Class of the Colored Race in the Southern States [an address at the Agricultural and Mechanical College for Negroes at Normal, Alabama, May 29, 1898] (n.p., n.d.), 4-5.

⁶Ibid., 9.

⁷The Southern Side, or Andersonville Prison (Baltimore, 1876), 291-292.

with them, their ignorant and untaught neighbors, exhibiting before their wondering eyes in daily life the principles of truth and justice, purity and charity, honesty and courage." The Bishop objected to the enactments of a Congress, or the proclamation of a president, as being powerless to "vivify the dead mass," but expressed great hope in the "patient counsel of a neighbor." He asked Southerners to give personal care, time, and sympathy to the development of the primitive Negro, "lest he drag us down with him." Although strangers had come among the Negroes and had alienated them from their former owners, the time had come to "reestablish tutelage" over Negroes, otherwise they must "retrograde to barbarism" and the South might then be forced to "wage relentless war" against them for self protection.⁸

It was consistent with the white man's belief in the superiority of his race for him to recommend the imposition of Anglo-Saxon control over backward peoples wherever found--in the South, the West, or in Africa. The New Orleans Picayune, in 1887, underlined the correctness of the South's program for educating Negroes through contact with the superior white race by urging that Indians, like Negroes, be

⁸"How Shall We Help the Negro?" Century Magazine, VIII (1885), 275-279. See also, Lilly, "The Negro in Relation to Religion," in Race Problems of the South, 119-121.

subjected to strict discipline to force them to learn agricultural arts and gradually to yield to the white man's civilizing influence; attempts at formal education for red or black savages had been a wretched failure.⁹ Eight years later, J. L. M. Curry commended the European powers for partitioning Africa, since, he believed, Negroes had to be forced out of the barbarism from which they were otherwise helpless to escape and placed under the supervision of advanced white men. Did not the Negro Bishop Turner, of Georgia, write from Liberia in 1895 advising the enslavement of Africans? Then "millions and jillions of Africans, who are now running around in a state of nudity, fighting, necromancing, masquerading and doing everything that God disapproves of, would be working and benefiting the world."¹⁰

To disarm critics of this long range educational policy, the Southerner was compelled to see himself as a kind guardian of the subordinate race. To prove kindness, propagandists narrated incidents in which whites condescended to instruct the simple Negroes. The Sunny South told how Governor Alfred H. Colquitt had appeared at a colored Sunday School "to preach to and teach the benighted freedmen."

⁹August 16, 28, 1887.

¹⁰Difficulties, Complications, and Limitations Connected with the Education of the Negro, 14.

The chief executive of Georgia stood "in this vast throng" --talking of the "vital truths of Christianity in their practical application to the colored people," and then "receiving their rude but sincere congratulations. . . ."

When the crowd dispersed, the area for blocks around was covered with "happy, smiling, well dressed colored children."¹¹

In 1879 Henry Watterson stated that there was in the South a humanity "born of old ties and associations, common griefs, fellow feeling" that linked the homestead and the cabin and bridged the present to the past. "To this humanity, and to it alone, the destiny of the Negro may be safely intrusted." The Republican Party, Watterson said, had done much to stamp out this feeling, "but, thank God, it is not yet extinct."¹²

Senator James B. Eustis of Louisiana also counseled the Negro to "rely implicitly upon the magnanimity of his white fellow citizens of the South" as a guarantee that he would be treated "with the justice and generosity due to his unfortunate conditions."¹³ The personal relations between Negroes and whites were friendlier in the South than in the

¹¹June 8, 1878.

¹²"The Solid South," North American Review, CXXVIII (1879), 47-58.

¹³"Race Antagonism in the South," Forum, VI (1888), 154.

North, Senator John T. Morgan of Alabama explained, because in the South they were "based upon the recognition, by both races, of the leadership and superiority of the white race."¹⁴

When the temptation to intervene in Southern affairs appeared to be dangerously stirring in the enemy camp, Southern spokesmen hastened to reaffirm the South's interest in the elevation of Negroes. A brief against threatened interference published in 1890 by Hilary Herbert praised Alabamians for providing care, protection, education, and "all sorts of advantages" to the Negroes since Alabama was "redeemed" in 1874. This was convincing proof "that the Negro prospered most where the power and influence of the white man is greatest"; whites "are, in fact, the best friends the Negro has."¹⁵ Such propaganda had its effect upon Northerners seeking an excuse to abandon the reformer's role. Satisfied of the Southerners' good intentions, E. L. Godkin announced his willingness to give them a free hand in training Negroes,¹⁶ and John R. Commons, an important liberal economist, accepted the South's management of the

¹⁴"Shall Negro Majorities Rule?" Forum, VI (1888), 588.

¹⁵Why the Solid South, 67.

¹⁶"The Republican Party and the Negro," Forum, VII (1889), 257.

"domesticated" race, although he believed that the brightest among them should be permitted to vote and to attend a university.¹⁷

* * *

Southerners could not educate Negroes as white men and then deprive them of a large measure of freedom, nor would they frankly admit that Negroes should be educated for subordination no matter what their capabilities. If it could be shown that the black race was actually incapable of profiting by the advanced education upon which Anglo-Saxons thrived, then the limitations which Southern policy placed upon the education of the Negro would appear simply a commonsense recognition of the facts of life. White men, therefore, undertook to prove that Negroes were dull. That blacks occupied a low level in the scale of ability, all agreed; divergence of opinion occurred on whether Negro inferiority was irrevocably fixed or could be eliminated by centuries of training under the supervision of advanced whites. Only an occasional independent thinker, such as George W. Cable, did not accept the supposed marked incapacity of the Negro, which Southerners in general deemed axiomatic.

¹⁷Races and Immigrants in America (New York, 1907), 39-62.

Some propagandists of Negro inferiority were especially uncompromising. To them blacks were incorrigibly dull, without the ability to forecast and plan or to arrange and combine, but happy as laborers for all that. Bennett Puryear, for one, argued that it was folly to attempt to teach a being like the Negro. Since the black excelled as an unskilled laborer because of a "low type of cerebral organization," it was unkind to tempt him to aspire to attainment beyond his reach.¹⁸ Such opponents of Negro education as Puryear denied the blacks any ability whatever to profit from traditional education. A little schooling, they believed, could not elevate a people ordained for manual labor, and must spoil them. Even Booker T. Washington's manual education, only mildly disturbing to most Southerners, was sufficiently intellectual to be regarded by the unbending minority as an "experiment in the impossible."¹⁹

It was difficult to maintain such a view when thousands of Negro children daily proved the presence of scholastic aptitude in the black race. Most Southerners were compelled to admit that the Negro child could learn reading and writing and arithmetic. Some said that Negro and white children

¹⁸The Public School in Its Relation to the Negro, 17-18.

¹⁹Norwood, Address on the Negro, 24.

learned at an equal pace up to age fourteen, beyond which the Negro mind ceased to advance while the white intellect continued to unfold.²⁰ Another group rejected this observation, on the grounds that brightness in the Negro child always revealed the uplifting presence of white blood. Still others, fearing the destruction of the Anglo-Saxon through enfeebling miscegenation, condemned the mulatto to certain failure, holding that only pure blacks possessed the necessary endurance for education.²¹

A more popular belief was that the Negro child might stay abreast of the superior Caucasian in simple learning, where imitative faculties functioned, but that complex material soon revealed the true character of the Negro's primitive mind. In exercises where memory was relied upon, black pupils might seem up to the standard of the whites of equal age and opportunities, but the race had developed no talent for abstract study of any sort. As for adult Negroes, the Southerner was surprised at their capacity for self-sustenance during the cataclysmic changes of war and reconstruction but assigned this triumph not to intelligence but to endurance.²²

²⁰R. W. Wright, "Richmond Since the War," Scribner's Monthly, XIV (1877), 312.

²¹Perry, Twelve Years Among the Colored People, 95.

²²Porte Crayon (David Hunter Strother), "Our Negro Schools," Harper Magazine, XLIX (1874), 462-464; Bond, Negro Education in Alabama, 147; Lilly, "The Negro in Relation to Religion," in Race Problems of the South, 118.

Most white apologists, content with the assertion that the ablest Negro fell below the average white in educational achievement, did not bother to analyze Negro learning power. The Negroes, it seemed, had at first rushed to school to avoid hard labor, but had soon been disenchanted by inability to reach the level of mediocre whites. Blacks achieved a deceptive success until they reached a low ceiling through which they could not break, a ceiling imposed by mental inferiority and marked instability of character, both inherent.²³

Southern whites found it safest to direct attention away from the individual to the race and to base estimates of intellectual quality on interpretations of Negro history. To compare a Negro with a white man, especially if the Negro were a Douglass, a Washington, or a Du Bois, could be embarrassing, but when the white and Negro races were compared historically, the white man's intellect seemed to expand while the Negro's contracted. William H. Ruffner, superintendent of Richmond's public schools, following this popular line of justification, conceded that in the great future the Negro race might possibly, though not probably, attain an equal rank with the foremost race. Accordingly

²³Jenny Woodville, "Rambling Talks About the Negro," Lippincott's Magazine, XXII (1878), 623-624.

he supported the education of Negroes, but with little expectation of success in the foreseeable future.²⁴ J. L. M. Curry, one of the most influential advocates of Negro education, believed that the Negro's limited capacity justified special and segregated education for him. Curry blamed Reconstruction for an unparalleled revolution which had clothed the Negro in a political status that excited false hopes and encouraged him to believe that he could at once attain what the "dominant race had attained after centuries of toil and trial and sacrifice."²⁵ Curry thought the Negro should be judged charitably, for his ancestors knew neither house nor home and lacked religious training, while his condition as a slave barred him from systematic instruction; still he had the "peculiarities and proclivities" and "feebleness of the moral sense which is common to all primitive races." Behind the Caucasian lay centuries of uplifting influence of civilization, of the institution of family, society, the churches, the state, and the salutary effects of heredity. Behind the Negro were centuries of ignorance, barbarism, slavery, superstition, idolatry, fetichism, and the transmissible consequences of heredity.²⁶

²⁴"Co-education of the White and Colored Races," Scribner's Monthly, VIII (1874), 86-90.

²⁵Difficulties, Complications, and Limitations Connected with the Education of the Negro, 5-7.

²⁶Ibid., 7.

Curry also employed recent history to demonstrate the truth of his pessimistic evaluation of the Negro's lack of aptitude for civilization. Though he recognized the achievement of a handful of eminent Negroes, and admitted that thirty years was too short a time in which to judge what progress the whole race could make, he, like most other Southerners, interpreted the Negro's history since the war as very discouraging.

Freedom, citizenship, suffrage, civil and political rights, educational opportunities and religious privileges, every method and function of civilization, have been secured and fostered by Federal and State Governments, ecclesiastical organizations, and munificent individual benefactions and yet the results have not been, on the whole, such as to inspire most sanguine expectation, or justify conclusions of rapid development or of racial equality.²⁷

After the "stubborn unimpeachable regrettable facts" had been considered, Curry inquired whether the Negro had not been assigned an educational position, "which ancient and modern history does not warrant."²⁸

Despite his great reputation as a Southern white champion of Negroes, it is clear that Curry's thinking on the "Negro question" sustained the caste system and that the sort of education which he favored for Negroes would only

²⁷Ibid., 9-10.

²⁸Ibid., 13-14; Report of the Chairman of the Educational Committee, Proceedings of the Trustees of the John F. Slater Fund for the Education of Freedmen, 1899 (Baltimore, 1899), 29.

inadvertently advance them toward equality with whites.

The novelist, Thomas Nelson Page, also reviewing recent history in search of proofs of the incapacity of the blacks for education, found that Southern whites, who had shown unprecedented generosity in providing education as a gift to the almost untaxable African, were rewarded with disappointing results. The blacks remained "barbers, and white-washers, shoe-blacks and chimney sweeps." Here and there Page discovered a lawyer or a doctor, but these exceptional Negroes were almost invariably "men with a considerable infusion of white blood in their veins," and without attainments above mediocrity.²⁹

* * *

The trouble was, education designed for whites spoiled the Negro worker. Immediately after the war, Booker T. Washington wrote, a large class of Southern people objected to Negro schools because the education of the head "would result in increasing the class who sought to escape labor," and the South would be "overrun by the idle and vicious."³⁰ Washington strove mightily to overcome this fear; but his system of combining academic and manual training never quite silenced the critics, though it enjoyed

²⁹"A Southerner on the Negro Question," North American Review, CLIV (1892), 409-410.

³⁰"The Awakening of the Negro," Atlantic Monthly, LXXVIII (1896), 327-328.

considerable prestige.

"To educate a Negro is to spoil a laborer and train up a candidate for the penitentiary,"³¹ the Southern mind ran. Bootblacks, hoe hands, and other manual workers, constituting the very foundations of civilized society, required little or no training. There must be mudsills.

The educated Negro felt degraded by his lowly calling. Unhappy, he worked less efficiently "than the simple laborer by his side, whose thoughts never rise higher than his calling, and whose guileless heart is made happy by a word of praise from his employer." Furthermore, the Negro laborer would never become excited by impossible ambition unless the spirit of unrest were "stirred within him by the constant teachings of a blasphemous philosophy."³²

Advocates of colored education acknowledged the influence of this view by claiming that education, far from making the cook spoil the supper or the farm hand neglect the cotton, would enhance the value of laborers. J. B. Killebrew, Assistant Superintendent of Education in Tennessee, had endeavored in the period following redemption to persuade white taxpayers, who resisted a school tax from which

³¹Tindall, South Carolina Negroes, 215-216; Bond, Negro Education in Alabama, 114; Alfred M. Waddell, "The Franchise in the South," in Race Problems of the South, 46.

³²Puryear, The Public School in Its Relation to the Negro, 10.

Negroes would benefit, that education would add twenty-five per cent to the value of Negro labor.³³ Despite such assurances, most Southerners continued to believe that education unfitted the Negro laborer to perform well and made him restless.

The fundamental dilemma posed by the existence of educational opportunities, however restricted, within a community which threw up ramparts against Negro advancement in other areas worried acute observers. The Rev. C. K. Marshall, noting the continued decline in the Negroes' participation in politics, anticipated an explosive situation when "ten thousand Negro scholars . . . will only find a support . . . in the full round of plantation labor."³⁴ In the meantime good farm hands had been ruined, as practical farmers shied away from Negroes with book learning.

Not only did education ruin the labor of field hands, it made them insubordinate. Bennett Puryear boasted of his kind feelings toward freedmen "whenever in their speech and conduct they acknowledged their true position," which they always did, he believed, so strong was their appreciation of the superiority of whites, unless "addled by the miserable

³³Taylor, The Negro in Tennessee, 183.

³⁴The Exodus: Its Effects upon the People of the South (Washington, 1880), 7.

teachings of a fanatical philanthropy."³⁵ Attempts to reconstruct the Negro, therefore, would bring unhappiness to him and catastrophe to society.

Since the South had very little appreciation of an educational system which unsettled its laborers, the change in attitude between the end of the war and the end of the century was barely noticeable. In 1893, Charles H. Smith argued that too much education and too little work was bad for Negroes. As the professions and trades were closed to them, their only recourse was manual labor, and the education they were receiving ruined them for that. Educated Negroes became tramps and vagabonds and supplied the convict camps. "Cinda's bright boy is in the chain-gang for forgery," Smith wrote, "he got a little too much education and it ruined him for honest work." When Negroes advanced to higher mathematics, they became "the dudes and vagabonds of towns, dressing well at somebody else's expense."³⁶ The Christian Advocate supported Smith's charge that education made the Negro ambitious and filled his mind with dreams of luxury. "Freedom and the spelling book" had ruined a "darkey coachman" who now "insisted that roast turkey is better food than

³⁵Puryear, The Public School in Its Relation to the Negro, 4.

³⁶"Have American Negroes Too Much Liberty?" Forum, XVI (1893), 179-180.

baked 'possum."³⁷

Professor Paul B. Barringer, in an address before the Southern Education Association in Richmond, December 29, 1900, reviewed the education of the Negro, and judged it a failure. The Negro, he said, had received as a gift from the South residence in a civilized society, the English tongue, the Christian religion, and the domestic arts; from the North he had received freedom, citizenship, and the ballot. In the next generation the race had received as a gift \$200 million in education. Notwithstanding this, the black still stood at the door of the South, now as a "criminal beggar." "As he has grown in criminality and physical depravity, since receiving what he has of education," Barringer said, "that kind of education is surely a failure." The Negro had used his education, "given in compassion," as a weapon of political offense against his benefactors. Nor would industrial education train the Negro for efficient labor without inducing him to attack the social order; even this education would be used to promote racial warfare. The need was for a new style of education that would specifically fit the degraded black for his role as an agricultural laborer.³⁸

³⁷December 13, 1890.

³⁸Printed in the Charleston News and Courier, December 29, 1900.

That was the heart of the question. Accepting his role, the Negro would be protected; rejecting it, he would invite attack from the master class. In unskilled labor he had encouragement and protection of the superior race, and thus his comfort, his happiness, and his usefulness were best attained. But let him attempt to move out of his natural status, and compete with the white man for work above his aptitude, "then he will find every inch of ground fiercely and stoutly contested; then he will arouse into opposition the pride of race, which will vindicate its native dignity, and with un pitying triumph bear him hopelessly down."³⁹

Education of the Negro in the white man's tradition was indeed revolutionary in its tendency. Some future generation would face the spectre of the educated Negro. What, then? "Suppose our educational schemes succeeded," Lawton B. Evans wondered, "suppose we elevate him [the Negro] as a race until he has the instincts and drives of a white man?" What would be the consequence? The Negro, having been taught his social and political rights, would demand their recognition. "Being trained for office he will demand office," Evans foresaw. "Being taught as a Negro child the

³⁹Puryear, The Public School in Its Relation to the Negro, 18.

same things and in the same way as the white child, when he becomes a Negro man he will want the same things and demand them in the same way as a white man."⁴⁰

A few Southerners were not frightened by the specter of educated Negroes demanding privileges supposedly restricted by right to white men. Sidney Lanier expected the freedmen to make giant strides from a lowly condition associated not with race but with slavery. Thus he was pleased by the demonstration of Atlanta University that the Negro was capable of advanced education.⁴¹ George Washington Cable, scornfully rejecting the South's defense of its educational policy, wanted to give individual Negroes every opportunity to advance, regardless of the overall quality of the black race.⁴² A "Dr. K" rejected all notions of Negro dullness as based on prejudice bred by darkness. The mind of the black as well as of the white man, he believed, was "formed for light."⁴³ Lewis H. Blair courageously advocated the

⁴⁰"The South and Its Problems," Educational Review, VII (1894), 339-340.

⁴¹"The New South," Scribner's Monthly, XX (1880), 844-845.

⁴²A Southern White Man, "Letter to the Editor," New Orleans Bulletin, September 26, 1874, in George W. Cable, The Negro Question (edited by Arlin Turner; New York, 1958), 26-29.

⁴³Cited by Waterbury, Seven Years Among the Freedmen, 125.

abolition of distinction, including segregation, in the education of whites and Negroes.⁴⁴

* * *

The danger of political revolution and subsequent social and economic revolution particularly worried conservatives, North and South, and led some of them to favor education for Negroes as a preventive of chaos. Desiring a conservative South, with a reliable working force, they believed that illiteracy was worse than foreign invasion, that it incited domestic violence and perpetually menaced republican institutions. Education, on the other hand, would keep Negroes from succumbing to the false ideas of agitators. Conservative classes, realizing the danger of populism and other "isms," thus stood for Negro education--but against the Negro vote.⁴⁵

The Trustees of the Peabody Fund, impressed with the imperative need of giving "safe" education to a mass of potentially dangerous citizens in the poverty-stricken South, went so far as to call for federal aid, provided that it could be administered by the states. The Trustees sought support in the writings of Washington and Jefferson, but

⁴⁴Johnson, "Southern Paternalism Toward Negroes After Emancipation," Journal of Southern History, XXIII (1951), 488.

⁴⁵Merle Curti, Social Ideas of American Educators (New York, c. 1935), 271, 281-282.

perhaps their most telling argument was to point to a danger of revolution.⁴⁶ Where large masses of population were ignorant, and in need of common necessities, the Trustees warned, nothing was easier than for scheming demagogues "to influence their minds against their more fortunate countrymen, who by patient industry and thrift have been able to surround themselves and their families with all the appliances of comfort and luxury." Noting that "four-fifths of all the bonds," and even a larger proportion of stocks, were "owned by Capitalists of the Northern and Eastern states," and that the people of the South and West, especially the colored people, owned very few of them, the Trustees asked: "What security have the people of the United States that these jarring interests of debtors and creditors, of numbers and property, may not in the future give rise to serious conflicts?" If to the turbulent element of the North were added "seven hundred thousand untutored and non-property-holding colored votes, whose interest is opposed to these kinds of property because of the taxation which they entail upon them, it requires no spirit of prophecy to foresee that the danger will be

⁴⁶Memorial of the Trustees of the Peabody Fund, with the Report of Their Committee on the Subject of the Education of the Colored Population of the Southern States, February 19, 1880 (Cambridge, Mass., 1880), 1-15.

greatly increased."⁴⁷ Education could be a conservative bulwark against the formation of an aggressive and politically organized proletariat.

An energetic Northern advocate of Negro education, the Rev. A. D. Mayo, also appealed to Southerners to guard against revolution by educating the Negroes:

The only condition under which ignorance is apparently a harmless element in society is a social order, organized according to the old-time patriarchal and paternal method, guided by an aristocracy of intelligence and character that protects the masses from their foes without, and their own folly and unrighteousness.⁴⁸

But slavery was over, Mayo insisted. It was necessary to save the Negro from "superstition, shiftlessness, vulgarity, and vice."⁴⁹

This was true even after the mass of blacks had been disfranchised. When Negro voters had marched to the polls in a cloud of ignorance they had been susceptible to manipulation and had thrown the South into the hands of demagogues, threatening the existence of the social order. Even if the Negroes were presently barred from the polls, how long could they be excluded?

⁴⁷Ibid., 21-22.

⁴⁸Mayo, The Opportunity and Obligation of the Educated Class of the Colored Race in the Southern States, 7.

⁴⁹Ibid., 9.

An occasional Southerner expected the common school to prepare the colored people for the right discharge of their duties as citizens. The Rev. Edgar Gardner Murphy favored Negro education on the ground that an ignorant class "cannot exist in a popular government without finally bringing it to disorder, distress, and ruin." "Each year," he said,

more and more there comes the danger of political disintegration among the whites, and a consequent disposition to call in the Negro vote as umpire. Shall we keep him in the condition which best fits him to follow vile leaders, with low appeals and evil passions, to bad government; or shall we guard against that day by educating him enough to make him amenable to the influence of reason and right?⁵⁰

But the typical Southerner did not approve training Negroes for politics. He wished their education limited to what might be necessary to encourage good behavior among them. In view of the system of thought which assigned a servant status to the Negroes, the definition of the goals of education was at once prescribed: Negro schools should turn out obedient, orderly workmen well versed in the duties of their station in life. David Hunter Strother, therefore, extolled education for its effects in improving the behavior of blacks. In the early years of Storer College, he said, the students "were discouragingly rude, unmannered,

⁵⁰The White Man and the Negro at the South, 22-23.

and disorderly, loud, coarse, and given to brawling and fighting," but after a time they could not be excelled in politeness. Domestic servants improved in honesty, 'possum hunting declined, and Negroes became respectful and more disposed to look up to whites.⁵¹

The dilemma involved in educating a subservient race caused the South to boast of its achievement in providing an educational establishment and, at the same time, worry about the consequences. The school often was criticized for its failure as an agency for training in proper behavior. Concern about Negro education frequently took the form of attacking the efficacy of this training, since good deportment among Negroes was a fundamental reason for its existence. Thomas Nelson Page asserted that it was universally believed in the South that public education appeared to be without beneficial effect upon Negro morals.⁵²

A Negro historian, Carter G. Woodson, has testified that the "mis-education" Southern whites provided for the Negro was an overwhelming success. It permitted the master class to manipulate the Negro's actions by the control of his thinking. This education stimulated the whites, while

⁵¹Strother, "Our Negro Schools," Harper's Magazine, XLIX (1874), 462.

⁵²Page, The Negro: The Southerner's Problem, 80.

it depressed and crushed the Negro, drilling into him the thought of his own inferiority.⁵³ Woodson denounced this education as the worst sort of lynching. It taught the student that his color was a curse and that struggle to change his condition was hopeless: "It kills one's aspirations and dooms him to vagabondage and crime."⁵⁴

In geography, Woodson complained, a poet of distinction would be pictured as representing the white race; a bedecked chief, the red; a prince, the yellow; "and a savage with a ring in his nose," the black. The content of the curricula encouraged the inference that the Negro belonged where he was found in society. Moreover, Woodson charged, Negro children were not permitted to use texts which contained the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, for the study of these documents might lead them to contend for their rights.⁵⁵

⁵³Woodson, The Mis-Education of the Negro, xiii.

⁵⁴Ibid., 2-3.

⁵⁵Ibid., 17-22, 82-83. Senator James B. Eustis of Louisiana argued that "the Negro at the South having been educated to rest content with his allotted rank, has no aspirations to attain equality with the white race." "Race Antagonism in the South," Forum, VI (1888), 149.

CHAPTER X

FINANCIAL DISCRIMINATION AGAINST NEGRO EDUCATION

Antagonism toward Negro education showed itself in the legislations of several Southern states as they were "redeemed." Tennessee Conservatives in 1870 repealed the public education law, with a consequent decline of spirit thereby producing discouragement among the blacks and their local friends and a loss of 104 schools, 326 teachers, and 7,655 pupils--all because of the dominance of a political element antagonistic to the education of Negroes.¹ In the same year Conservatives in North Carolina began their attack on Negro education by sharply reducing the salary of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, a key official in the Radical system; ere long the schools were practically closed.² Redeemed Alabama inaugurated a retrenchment program and restored education to local reactionary control.³ During 1874 and 1875 Arkansas closed its schools.⁴ In 1875 the Mississippi

¹Taylor, The Negro in Tennessee, 176.

²Whitener, "Public Education in North Carolina during Reconstruction, 1865-1876," in Essays in Southern History, 67-90; Du Bois, Black Reconstruction, 657.

³Du Bois, Black Reconstruction, 653; Bond, Negro Education in Alabama, 148-150.

⁴Du Bois, Black Reconstruction, 659.

legislature seriously cramped Negro education by drastically reducing school appropriations.⁵ In South Carolina most Negro schools closed during the anarchy of the Red Shirts' triumphant campaign of 1876.⁶

The South's explanation for the decline in education, especially in Negro education, was that Radicals had engendered race hatred and had destroyed financial resources. Even Charles W. Dabney, who conceded that Radical governments did some good in forcing discussion of public education, judged their school systems miserable failures. Accordingly, he honored Wade Hampton's Superintendent of Education, Hugh S. Thompson, as the founder of South Carolina's public schools.⁷

In Texas the constitution of 1866 had provided for the education of white scholastics" exclusively.⁸ Though this constitution was superseded, concern for the whites to the disadvantage of Negroes continued to be manifested throughout the rest of the century. For a time the Radicals successfully challenged white privilege,⁹ only to suffer

⁵Wharton, The Negro in Mississippi, 247-248.

⁶Tindall, South Carolina Negroes, 209.

⁷Dabney, Universal Education in the South, I, 235.

⁸Article X-Education, Section 2, in Eby, Education in Texas: Source Materials, 449.

⁹Constitution of the State of Texas, 1869, Article IX, ibid., 516-518; Report of the United States Commissioner of Education, in ibid., 542-546.

crushing defeat with white "redemption." Texans then repealed the advanced school law the Radicals had initiated and abolished the office of Superintendent of Public Instruction,¹⁰ thus destroying the burgeoning "centralized despotism" of the state over local communities,¹¹ and securing the practical abolition of the public schools, despite pledges to the contrary.¹²

The Negroes protested, and so did their sometime allies, the Republicans, the Greenbackers, and the Populists.¹³ These groups, supported in a general way by the Peabody Fund battling for public education,¹⁴ and a growing public sentiment in favor of free schools, gradually forced the "solid

¹⁰An Act to Establish and Maintain a System of Public Free Schools in the State of Texas, in *ibid.*, 562-571; Constitution of the State of Texas, 1876, Article VII, Section 8, in *ibid.*, 674.

¹¹"Circular to the Democracy of Bastrop County and Voters Generally," in *ibid.*, 573-578.

¹²R. C. Burleson to Governor O. M. Roberts, April 29, 1879, in *ibid.*, 782-783; Fifth Biennial Report to the Superintendent of Public Instruction (1885-1886), in *ibid.*, 819.

¹³Address, Colored Men's Convention, Brenham, Texas, July 3-4, 1873, *ibid.*, 581-584; Platform, Independent Greenback Convention, 1878, in *ibid.*, 705-706; Demands, Texas State Grange, 1880, *ibid.*, 773-774; Platform, Republican State Convention, 1880, *ibid.*, 774; Platform, Greenback-Labor State Convention, 1880, *ibid.*, 776; Greenback State Convention, 1882, *ibid.*, 776-777.

¹⁴Rufus C. Burleson to Governor O. M. Roberts, April 29, 1879, in *ibid.*, 783.

Democracy" to abandon empty promises for concrete action in order to maintain its monopoly of government.¹⁵

The result was a movement back toward the "centralized despotism" of the Radicals. The school law of 1884 tightened general supervision by reviving the office of the State Superintendent and committed the state to general taxation for education.¹⁶ The new Superintendent, in his report for 1885-1886, was then able to refer to the Radical program as without fault, except for its financial extravagance and its partisan motivation.¹⁷

This change represented a partial resurrection of Radical philosophy, despite the justificatory criticism of the Radicals indulged in by the architects of the revived system. The law of 1884, however, was by no means designed to undermine "Anglo-Saxon" supremacy, for the whites retained total control of its administration, including the "separate but equal" provision. Nor was there the same flaming spirit of mission, nor the sense of justice, which had moved the Radicals. Rufus C. Burleson, a leading advocate of improved

¹⁵Platform, Democratic State Convention, 1884, in ibid., 810-811.

¹⁶School Law of 1884, in ibid., 803-810.

¹⁷Fifth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (1885-1886), in ibid., 818.

schools, conceded that the state had a right to support education by taxation, simply in order to protect every man's property, person, and liberties. This was, he said, the "old-fashioned democracy as taught by Jefferson himself." Burleson, however, recoiling from the radical spirit, would restrain the legislature from supporting an extravagant system:

But the sentimental cant about 'the State owing to every child an education' savors of agrarianism and would plunge this nation into the vortex of communism in twenty-five years. And it is high time to eliminate from government all these dangerous tendencies.¹⁸

The Southern argument ran about as follows: (1) the white Johnson governments justifiably neglected education out of fear that freedmen would be admitted to the schools; (2) the Carpetbag educators created a good system of public education in theory, but impoverished the South and incited race war; (3) therefore, Radicals were responsible for the redeemed South's neglect of education, for the white as well as for the Negro child.¹⁹

White children also suffered from near destruction of the school system, brought on partly by omnipresent

¹⁸Rufus C. Burleson to Governor O. M. Roberts, April 29, 1879, in ibid., 785.

¹⁹Whitener, "Public Education in North Carolina during Reconstruction, 1865-1876," in Essays in Southern History, 75-79.

poverty, but principally because the new democratic system of education challenged the old order. Less than one-half the enumerated school children attended classes in eight of twelve Southern states in 1879-1880, and illiteracy among the whites increased by 100,000 during the decade 1870 to 1880.²⁰ In many counties in Texas the value of the common jail exceeded that of all school property during the 1887-1888 school year.²¹

* * *

When it eventually proved necessary to do something toward educating the Negro in order to give weight to the Southerner's contention that he would treat the blacks right if left alone, opposition to Negro education was diverted to the question of equal distribution of school funds among white and colored children. Equal apportionment of school revenue to sustain the "equal but separate" school facilities was objectionable on several grounds. It would in time eliminate the gap between the white and black races. Propertied groups would be forced to contribute a part of their property for the purpose of making Negro laborers less dependent and less

²⁰Dabney, Universal Education in the South, I, 115.

²¹Oscar H. Cooper, Sixth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Scholastic Year Ending August 31, 1887, and July 1, 1888. In Eby, Education in Texas: Source Materials, 832.

exploitable. Black workers might then set up for themselves or go off to the state legislature to appropriate more of the white man's money for their own benefit.

The Southern Review in 1872 had doubted if there were better grounds in "taxing us to give our neighbor's child an education than in taxing us to give him a farm"; agrarianism in education was no different from agrarianism in land.²² Bennett Puryear in 1877 worried that the Virginia school tax was fostering "mischievous experiments of quixotic philanthropy."²³ Believing it a high crime to support such a "mammoth charity," he asserted that the school fund alone was sufficient to satisfy the entire demands of honest government.²⁴ Indeed, the whole scheme of Negro education was foisted "upon us by the brute tyranny of numbers, supported by the votes of those who give it no money, and by the money of those who give it no votes."²⁵

They will tax it so as to make it tributary to their interests, increasing the tax more and more for their own benefit, until property yields more revenue to the public than to its nominal owners, and this is practical confiscation. Or, they may demand and enforce

²²"Religion and Civil Government," XI (1872), 387.

²³The Public School in Its Relation to the Negro, 19.

²⁴Ibid., 21-22.

²⁵Ibid., 35.

actual partition and inaugurate downright communism.²⁶

Purveyer argued that universal suffrage was, ipso facto, a confiscation of property; therefore, the poor man had no right to control that which did not belong to him; in other words, "he has no right to suffrage." Since the poorest of the poor were the Negroes, they above all had neither the right to free education nor to suffrage. If the lowly Negro and poor white were to gain control of government, "not only life, and property and good government, but our honor and our social status and the very sanctities of the fireside are imperiled."²⁷

In the Texas constitutional convention of 1866 O. M. Roberts had moved to tax one race and not the other or the two races at different rates in order to eliminate, or minimize, white support of Negro schools. Other delegates had hoped to raise funds for Negro school children exclusively from taxes paid by "Africans, or persons of African descent."²⁸ This was done in Kentucky until 1879.²⁹ The Charlottesville (Virginia) Chronicle in 1879 proposed the Kentucky system

²⁶Ibid., 37.

²⁷Ibid., 37-39.

²⁸Journal of the Convention, 2 vols. (Austin, 1870), I, 209.

²⁹Dabney, Universal Education in the South, I, 278-279.

for Virginia.³⁰ The Mississippi Convention of 1890 provided for "equal" support of separate schools. During debate several delegates had conducted a fight to deny Negro schools any funds collected from white taxpayers. Their minority report, after noting the large number of children belonging to a race that hardly paid taxes but yearly became more alienated from the whites, then warned that the people would look with a jealous eye on the creation and distribution of the school fund.³¹

In 1901 a bill was introduced in the legislature of North Carolina to provide for a division of school funds in accordance with tax income from the two races. Governor Aycock defeated the bill by threatening to resign. Although the bill came up again in 1903 and 1905, Aycock successfully opposed the change on the grounds that the courts would overthrow the proposed amendment along with the amendment which called for an educational qualification for the suffrage after 1908, if it appeared that North Carolina wished to keep the Negro in ignorance at the same time it disfranchised him for ignorance.³²

³⁰February 14, 1879.

³¹Journal of the Convention, 132.

³²Louis Harlan, Separate and Unequal: Public School Campaigns and Racism in the Southern Seaboard States, 1901-1915 (Chapel Hill, 1958), 63-65.

Unable and perhaps unwilling to deprive Negroes of all education, the white South in order to parry criticism boasted of its generosity in providing what education it did. During the campaign of 1876 the Charleston News and Courier denied the Radical charge that Negroes would be deprived of education in the event of a Conservative victory by citing the generosity of the Southern whites, as exhibited by "redeemed" Georgia, which supported a "lavish" Negro school system, though the blacks of that state paid only \$23,000 of the million and a quarter bill.³³

According to J. L. M. Curry, colored education at the South was at first reluctantly conceded and grudgingly supported, but finally perfected at heavy cost. A few years after emancipation, Southerners had provided the freedman with a school system "without cost to himself, and chiefly by the self-imposed taxes of those who, a few years before, claimed his labor and time without direct wage or pecuniary condition."³⁴

In 1889, when the Democratic party of Texas was attacked for a lack of interest in the education of Negroes, Governor Lawrence S. Ross replied: "The Democrats of Texas

³³November 4, 1876.

³⁴Education of the Negroes since 1860 (Baltimore, 1894), 7.

have agreed that the negro shall enjoy equal rights before the law, and cost what it may, they will, whether the party's majority is 165,000 or 5,000, accord the negro whatever the contract calls for." Applauding whites for contributing to the Negro's advancement, he expressed surprise at the "singular notion that the Democrats could be hostile to the negro. It would be idiotic to yearly hand out \$665,000 for the negro's advancement if the Democrats designed to suppress them."³⁵ Notwithstanding Governor Ross's claim of impartiality in the support of Negro and white schools, a convention of Negroes meeting at Brenham in 1893 charged that whites still hampered Negro education.³⁶

Southerners often congratulated themselves for rapid improvement of Negro education. W. P. Trent, for example, believed the great differences between the old and new Southerner was that the former valued education of his own children only, and never saw the relationship between "old-field schools" and a shiftless class of poor whites. He especially congratulated the new men for educating children of their slaves. "They have spent millions," he wrote:

for the education of a race that pays little in taxes, and is hardly capable of appreciating the benefits it receives. They have done this in spite of the fact

³⁵Cited by Eby, The Development of Education in Texas, 269.

³⁶Ibid., 270.

that no good results of any moment will ever be seen by them or by their children. They know the negro well. And they know it is idle to hope that this race can be really elevated for centuries; they know also that with him it is especially true that 'a little learning is a dangerous thing'; but they have acted on the principle that they must do for their wards (for the negro is the ward of the South, not the nation) the best that is in their power, as they have built schoolhouses and trained colored teachers, and are willing to raise whatever money may be necessary to render the work more efficient.³⁷

If whites paid greater attention to their needs, Trent argued, that was only natural and "plainly right, for the future of the South depends chiefly upon its white population."

He thought the development of free white schools "no less remarkable than the interest that has been taken in the negro."³⁸

Thomas Nelson Page, like Trent, was amazed at the generosity of Southerners in taxing themselves for the benefit of Negroes. He pronounced this beneficence "one of the most creditable pages" in the South's history, and that too "in the face of the horror of Negro-domination," of disappointment at the small results; and "of the fact that the education of Negroes has appeared to be used by them only as a weapon with which to oppose the white race." Page noted with pride that the repeated attempts to base financial support of Negro schools on tax income from the Negro community always

³⁷"Tendencies of Higher Life in the South," Atlantic Monthly, LXXIX (1897), 772.

³⁸"Dominant Forces in Southern Life," in ibid., 21.

failed.³⁹ If the South deserved enthusiastic praise for its financial sacrifice on behalf of the Negro, then surely it could not be condemned for providing inferior facilities, because any measure of free education for this inferior and alien race was more than just.

* * *

For a time the South flirted with the idea that all America should be invited to help support the burden of Negro education. A number of Northern members of Congress, appreciating the South's feeble financial ability, hoped to make federal assistance available. In 1880 the Charlottesville (Virginia) Weekly Chronicle praised the memorial of the Trustees of the Peabody Fund to Congress on the need for federal assistance in the education of the colored people and declared itself for such assistance, provided no federal control was attached.⁴⁰ The Sunny South commented somewhat sourly that the reason Northerners were becoming aware of responsibility for the education of Negroes was not benevolence but a growing fear of Negro voters.⁴¹ The Charleston News and Courier, agreeing that it was unsafe to leave the

³⁹The Negro: the South's Problem, 60-61.

⁴⁰March 26, 1880.

⁴¹April 2, 1881.

Negroes in ignorance, and believing that nine out of ten needed the discipline and training of the public schools, advocated the use of funds from the sale of United States public lands for allotment to the states on the basis of the number of illiterates.⁴²

The repeated failure of the Blair Bill, which would have allocated public land revenues to the states according to need, moved J. L. M. Curry to complain that Congress deliberately refused aid for the removal of illiteracy, leaving the unaided and impoverished South to carry that burden. "Bravely and with heroic self-sacrifice," he wrote, "have they sought to fulfill the obligation."⁴³ Curry hoped to disarm Northern critics by citing state legislation forbidding discrimination against Negro children in the allocation of school funds; he expected to allay Southern fears by demanding federal funds with no strings attached.⁴⁴ Public schools, he said, were "among the best teachers of the duties of citizenship and the most potent agency for moulding and unifying and binding heterogeneous elements of nationality into compactness, unity and homogeneity."⁴⁵ Curry

⁴²December 21, 1880; August 3, 1882.

⁴³Difficulties, Complications, and Limitations Connected with the Education of the Negro, 16.

⁴⁴Ibid., 17.

⁴⁵Ibid., 18.

was repeating Northern statements about the value of education in Americanizing immigrants, and he did not explain how segregated education in the South could achieve this exalted purpose. In truth, it was not his intention that it should, even though he was a powerful advocate of public education for Negroes and wished them to have their fair share of public money.⁴⁶ A major reason Southerners had such a high regard for Curry and the Peabody Foundation, which imported Northern money was that they never challenged white supremacy.⁴⁷

The Blair Bill, on the other hand, a threat to white supremacy, induced in the South both criticism and applause. The Texas Democratic Conventions of 1884 and 1886 opposed it as an unconstitutional and dangerous encroachment upon the rights of the states and another step towards the destruction of the Republic.⁴⁸ As might have been expected, the Texas Republican Convention of 1886, with colored people in control, took an opposite position, endorsing the education of the masses in general and supporting the Blair Bill in particular. Two years earlier both the "straight-out" and

⁴⁶Curti, Social Ideas of American Educators, 279-280.

⁴⁷Dabney, Universal Education in the South, I, 101.

⁴⁸See excerpts from the Republican platforms in Eby, Education in Texas: Source Materials, 813.

regular Republican Conventions had denounced the Texas senators for voting against the bill.⁴⁹ In other Southern states some white leaders favored the Blair Bill, evidently believing that the states could administer federal aid in such a way as to benefit whites at the expense of Negroes.⁵⁰ Senator John T. Morgan of Alabama feared, however, that federal aid would seriously disturb labor conditions in his state by lengthening the school term for Negro children, thus drawing them from the cotton fields in which they were most needed.⁵¹

In the first years of the twentieth century the Southern Education Board, an intersectional partnership of Northern industrialists and Southern progressives who advocated education as the key solution to the race problem, bowed to white supremacists who insisted that education for Negroes should be inferior.⁵² After a conference with county superintendents in North Carolina Wallace Buttrick, a Northern member of the Board, decided that a just division of funds between Negro and white schools would arouse hostility to Northern philanthropy.

⁴⁹Ibid., 780-812.

⁵⁰Allen J. Goins, "The South and the Blair Education Bill," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLIV (1957), 269-290.

⁵¹Bond, Negro Education in Alabama, 142.

⁵²Louis R. Harlan, "The Southern Education Board and the Race Issue in Public Education," Journal of Southern History, XXIII (1957), 193-194.

"As a matter of absolute justice they [Negroes] ought to participate proportionately with the whites," Buttrick wrote in a confidential report, but "we shall . . . invite defeat, if, in the present state of public sentiment, we demand too much from the white people of the South."⁵³ Thus adopting a policy of expediency Northern philanthropists "actually joined forces with the upper-class conservatives who quietly administered school discrimination."⁵⁴ Yet Northerners did work timidly against financial discrimination in education.⁵⁵ The Rockefeller-financed General Education Board in 1915 considered the securing of increased allotments from public funds for Negro education, still disproportionately small, one of its major purposes.⁵⁶

In 1900 the Southern states spent approximately three times as much in educating the white child as in educating the Negro child. During this year in South Carolina expenditure for each white pupil was \$5.75 for every dollar spent in

⁵³Cited in ibid., 195.

⁵⁴Ibid., 196.

⁵⁵Ibid., *passim*.

⁵⁶The General Education Board: An Account of Its Activities, 1902-1914 (New York, 1915), 196. The General Education Board, endowed by John D. Rockefeller, aimed to promote education without distinction of race, sex, or creed. A number of other philanthropists, such as John F. Slater, Daniel Hand, Anna T. Jeanes, Caroline Phelps Stokes, and Julius Rosenwald, created funds specifically for the improvement of Negro education.

educating the Negro child; by 1915 the ratio had increased to 12 to 1. By other measurements, such as the comparison in the value of school property, transportation, attendance, students per teacher, and opportunities to attend high school, the contrast was even more striking.⁵⁷ In Alabama, as late as 1914-15, 80 per cent of the Negro children lived in rural areas, and less than half of them attended school; practically all who did were enrolled in the first five grades.⁵⁸ Financial discrimination against the segregated Negro schools was very successful in restricting Negro education.

⁵⁷Harlan, "The Southern Education Board and the Race Issue in Public Education," Journal of Southern History, XXIII (1957), 196-202; Harlan, Separate and Unequal, 8-40; Bond, Negro Education in Alabama, 161-163; Bond, The Education of the Negro in the American Social Order (New York, 1934), 151-167.

⁵⁸General Education Board, Report of the Secretary, 1914-1915 (New York, n.d.), 37.

CHAPTER XI

THE INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION MOVEMENT

Southerners entertained the belief that higher education was unsuited to Negroes. Any attempt to educate them as white men was an attempt to treat children as adults. Thus the whites argued that manual education would, in addition to providing the type of education suited to Negroes' abilities, equip them for greater efficiency in agricultural pursuits, while providing openings for a handful of the most gifted as artisans. Around the end of the century industrial education for Negroes became a great subject for controversy.

It was then an accepted belief that academic education for Negroes was dangerous to the social order--and highly impractical. The Reverend Charles K. Marshall thought college instruction beneficial only in training prospective immigrants to Africa. Merely to turn out educated colored men to float about "with Homer in one pocket and a shoe-brush in the other, or with Euclid in one hand and a coach-whip in the other; is to . . . open the way to make the conditions of real culture worse than in the days of bondage."¹ The Reverend Edgar Gardner Murphy declared that Greek and

¹The Exodus: Its Effects on the People of the South, 11.

Latin encouraged the Negro male to avoid hard labor and the female to shun cooking, because her diploma was in "'broidery and vocal culture." Thus Murphy was critical of the numerous little Negro colleges in the South, maintained by well-meaning Northerners, which dispensed "just such nonsense."²

Misguided philanthropy opened high schools and universities and offered courses in languages, theology, and philosophy to those who might benefit from manual education. Miseducation explained the inclination of Negroes to become preachers and teachers.³ A Negro historian, Carter G. Woodson, more accurately observed that academic training only informed the Negro about things he was not permitted to do.⁴

The Southerner, who retailed the widely accepted notion that there were too many Negro preachers abroad, failed to see that the abundance of clergymen might well be explained by the fact that Negro intelligence and capacity for leadership were blocked in most other directions. Whites had, indeed, good reason to worry about the preachers. Negro churches were relatively independent of white control, and the preacher was in a position to encourage his parishioners

²The White Man and the Negro at the South, 23-24.

³Curry, Difficulties, Complications, Limitations, Connected with the Education of the Negro, 19-20.

⁴Woodson, Mis-Education of the Negro, 144.

to aspire to liberty. It was a "notorious fact" that the colored preacher kept his people in a state of agitation and politically antagonistic to whites.⁵

Various publications sought to provide evidence that academic instruction violated the black man's nature. The Chattanooga Tradesman discovered from a "searching inquiry of employers" that education generally detracted from the black worker's efficiency.⁶ The New Orleans Times-Democrat agreed that this was true--but only because the wrong kind of education was offered.⁷ The Times-Democrat declared that founding Negro universities in the South would be almost as preposterous as founding universities in the heart of Africa to develop the natives there. But industrial training was good, for it guaranteed Negroes work by teaching them how to work intelligently. Negroes ought especially to learn agriculture plus the carpentering and blacksmithing they had learned under slavery. If they undertook the study of law, theology, or journalism, they were doomed to extinction.⁸ John Gilmer

⁵Waddell, "The Franchise in the South," in Race Problems of the South, 46.

⁶Quoted in "Education of the Colored Race," Report of Secretary of Interior (Washington, 1897), 2087.

⁷Ibid., 2087.

⁸Cited in ibid., 2085.

Speed also believed that attempts to "grow a great crop of negro preachers, lawyers, and doctors," had raised "grave doubts whether the colored race in the South was not lapsing into a barbarism worse than that of slavery."⁹ The Atlanta Constitution demanded that manual training be given to Negroes engaged in teacher training, for it would be a curse to turn them loose in the South if they failed to get teaching posts.¹⁰ Jerome Dowd explained that nature had endowed Negroes with sharp vision so that they might develop skill in dealing with objects but had deprived them of capacity for the abstract studies in which too many were ineffectually engaged at the expense of their skills and their jobs.¹¹ Both Speed and Dowd enthusiastically welcomed the movement for industrial education as the Negro's salvation. Professor G. T. Winston supported industrial training simply because "The negro is our labor unit . . . and he is less skilled than during slavery."¹²

Radicals, Southerners complained, had taught the Negroes

⁹"New Light in the Blackbelt," Century Magazine, XXVIII (1895), 797-798.

¹⁰October 18, 1892.

¹¹"Paths of Hope for the Negro: Practical Suggestions of a Southerner," Century Magazine, XXXIX (1900-1901), 278-281.

¹²Address printed in the Charleston News and Courier, December 29, 1900.

to quit work and become lawyers and politicians with the result that the new generation lost the manners, morals, and skills learned as slaves. But the great educators of Negroes, notably Armstrong and Washington, wisely had reversed this policy by establishing the type of schools which the plantations themselves had been, agricultural and mechanical training schools.¹³

* * *

Distinguished Southern educators were often great propagandists for industrial education because they knew that positions requiring advanced education, except for medicine and theology, and teaching, were not available to Negroes outside the Negro communities. Thus J. L. M. Curry, representative though he was of professional men, editors, politicians, and educators, seldom made a speech or wrote a report without advising industrial education for the Negroes.¹⁴ Curry was quick to criticize the private colleges which unrealistically offered them academic training, while he gladly reported that in the "special colored schools established or aided by the State, of a higher order than the public

¹³Robert Lowery, "The Negro as a Mechanic," North American Review, CLVI (1893), 472-477; Dabney, Universal Education in the South, I, 436-437; Hollis Burke Frissell, "Popular Education in the South," in Race Problems of the South, 84-89.

¹⁴Curti, Social Ideas of American Educators, 278.

schools" (a phrase pregnant in significance), such as those in Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas, manual training was required. Disregarding "speculative opinions" concerning the progress of which the Negro might be "ultimately capable," Curry could see no reasonable objection to the fact that in the South the Negro's hope was "to be found, not so much in the high courses of university instruction, or in schools of technology, as in handicraft instruction." Consequently he lauded Hampton, Spelman, Claflin, Tuskegee, Tougaloo, and other schools which emphasized manual arts.¹⁵

Curry apparently did not advocate industrial training as a means of holding the Negro down; that is to say, he apparently did not consciously hold such a view, though he may have been a victim of the propaganda which he so ably spread. He worried about Negro workers who, after the crop was in, squandered their meager income "for whiskey, tobacco and worthless goods," and was disturbed that the "poverty, wretchedness, hopelessness of the present life were sometimes in pitiable contrast to the freedom from care and anxiety, the cheerfulness and frolicsomeness, of ante-bellum days."¹⁶

¹⁵Curry, Difficulties, Complications, Limitations, Connected with the Education of the Negro, 19.

¹⁶Ibid., 9.

W. P. Trent entertained a contempt for the poor whites, practically uniting them with the blacks in one sluggish, undesirable class. Although Trent distinguished between black and white, his strong emphasis on the desirability of social stratification tended to blot out the color line on the lowest level, at least in his theory. Like Curry, he despised the "half-baked" instruction offered in small denominational colleges, and favored schools of the Booker T. Washington type as best able to overcome the intellectual Torpor of Negroes and poor whites. This kind of education further recommended itself to Trent, as to so many others, because it would develop the reliable labor force the South needed.¹⁷

Daniel C. Gilman, president of Johns Hopkins University, also envisioned the Negro's salvation in terms of hard labor. In an address at the opening of the Armstrong-Slater Trade School in November, 1896, Gilman stressed the blessings of labor. "Work, work, work," he said, "has distinguished every progressive and prosperous race," while "sloth, sloth, sloth, has been the characteristic of decadence and imbecility." Gilman expected to win the resigned acquiescence

¹⁷"Tendencies of Higher Life in the South," Atlantic Monthly, LXXIX (1897), 772-773. See also Evans, "The South and Its Problems," Educational Review, VII (1894), 333-334.

of the Negro race to manual labor by explaining that the distinction between the races was permanent, "that this distinction is natural and cannot be set aside by human action; that the lessons of history make it clear that differences of race are ineffaceable, by legislation or volition." Each race, he urged, must recognize these differences and develop such qualities as it had.¹⁸

Walter B. Hill, chancellor of the University of Georgia, also based endorsement of manual education on the ground of Negro inferiority. Hill described three steps in the education of the Negro: "Uncle Tom in his master's cabin," when he received training in the virtues of order, fidelity, temperance, and obedience; "Uncle Tom without a cabin," when he failed to benefit by the academic education for which his superior the Anglo-Saxon had been prepared through centuries of growth; and "Uncle Tom in his own cabin," when he received training which supplemented and developed the education begun under slavery, a realistic type of education ushered in by Armstrong and Washington.¹⁹

So effective was the South's propaganda, and so well adjusted to the prevailing laissez faire conception of

¹⁸Daniel C. Gilman, A Study in Black and White: An Address at the Opening of the Armstrong-Slater Trade School Building, November 18, 1896 (Baltimore, 1896), 11-14.

¹⁹Cited by Dabney, Universal Education in the South, II, 100-102.

labor's role in the economy, that Northern industrial magnates gave their support to the movement for manual education. Not until the death of Wallace Buttrick in 1926 did the General Education Board begin to promote cultural as well as industrial education of Southern Negroes.²⁰ The John F. Slater Fund, created in 1882 to uplift the freedmen and their posterity by means of Christian education, concentrated its attention on manual training schools.²¹ The Southern Education Board channeled Northern funds into Negro industrial institutes and white colleges.²² Foreign observers, too, fell easy victims to Southern propaganda to the effect that races followed the same evolutionary process as individuals, only much more slowly, and that Negroes therefore required manual training.²³

Adherents were gained also among the Negro community itself. Booker T. Washington thought that "a large proportion of the colored men and women who are educated in the

²⁰Curti, Social Ideas of American Education, 305.

²¹Ellwood P. Cubberly, Public Education in the United States: A Study and Interpretation of American Educational History (Boston, 1934), 441-442.

²²Harlan, "The Southern Education Board and the Race Issue in Public Education," Journal of Southern History, XXIII (1951), 195.

²³James Bryce, "Thoughts on the Negro Problem," North American Review, CLIII (1891), 642-657; Abbe Felix Klein, In the Land of the Strenuous Life (Chicago, 1905), 301-303.

colleges should take up industrial pursuits." Mere book education, he said, often took the young man from the farm and made "him yield to the temptation of trying to earn a living in a city by the use of his wits."²⁴ No wonder he was proclaimed by Southerners as the wisest leader of his race. But when the historian John Spencer Bassett, then a young professor at Trinity University in North Carolina, suggested that Booker T. Washington, next to Lee, was the greatest modern Southerner, he raised a tempest of protest that nearly cost him his job.²⁵

Washington's style of education had been brought from Hawaii by General Samuel Armstrong, who, as a Freedman's Bureau officer, turned from leading Negro troops during the war and protecting them immediately after emancipation, to educating them for the future. The General's father had been one of the missionary founders of manual labor schools in the Islands and long-time Minister of Public Instruction there. The Hawaiian experiment in uplifting humble people was reenacted at Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute,

²⁴New Orleans Times-Democrat, January 24, 1897, cited in Report of the Secretary of Interior, 2090.

²⁵Edgar W. Knight and Clifton L. Hall, "Educational and Other Rights of Negroes," Readings in American Educational History (New York, 1951), 682-685. Andrew Carnegie called Washington "a modern Moses and Josua combined." Cited by Bond, Negro Education in Alabama, 212.

where Washington obtained his training.²⁶

Armstrong's Hampton Institute and Washington's Tuskegee envisioned a long-range training program to elevate the Negro by teaching him the dignity of labor and the value of orderly habits.²⁷ The purpose of teacher training at Hampton was to equip the recipient to be a light of civilization in his community, elevating his race by the power of example. But his education should not unfit him to dwell in the Negro community: "A poor man himself, he should be able at any time to enter the workshop or the fields, and make up the deficiencies of his often ill-paid salary."²⁸ Washington taught his students that labor was a spiritual force, which not only increased wage-earning capacity but promoted fidelity, accuracy, honesty, and persistence.²⁹ He wished to make his people indispensable to the ruling class at home. If that were done, the Negro could, silently and unnoticed, work out of the trough.³⁰

²⁶Frissell, "Popular Education in the South," in Race Problems of the South, 95-97; Ludlow, "Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute," Harper's Magazine, XLVIII (1873), 672.

²⁷Ludlow, "Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute," Harper's Magazine, XLVIII (1873), 672.

²⁸Ibid., 673, 681.

²⁹Washington, "The Awakening of the Negro," Atlantic Monthly, XXXVIII (1896), 323-324.

³⁰Ibid., 324-326; Social Ideas of American Educators, 291-297.

Washington appealed to Northern industrialists for assistance, and obtained financial support from the Peabody and Slater Funds and from Collis Huntington, Andrew Carnegie, H. H. Rogers of Standard Oil, and others. He declared that Negroes were not given to striking and that industrial education promised a skilled, docile, and cheap labor supply, and diminishing social friction.³¹

Washington did not wish to consign his race to perpetual servitude; indeed, his goal was integration, though he could not afford to say so. Aware of the weakness of Northern support and of the Negro's vulnerability to attack by white supremacists within the South, he expected neither the states nor the federal government to promote the interests of his people. Nor could Negroes resort to outright agitation. In place of political means, which had been taken away, Washington offered economic means to achieve integration, and advised the Negro to accept a despised status for a time, while seeking to destroy the oppressive system from within, laying the foundation upon which his children

³¹Curti, Social Ideas of American Educators, 299. Huntington gave Washington only \$2 when first solicited, but eventually donated thousands; among Carnegie's numerous gifts was one of \$600,000. Bond, Negro Education in Alabama, 212-213.

and grandchildren could build.³² The increasing wealth of a self-reliant people would overthrow a structure unassailable by the impatient and aggressive politician. This was the strategy of determined weakness, the method of the conquered who avoids certain defeat in a bold encounter, but who cannot and will not be subdued in patient conflict.

Washington noted that he could win friends in Boston to sustain Tuskegee without alienating white supporters at home.³³ He seldom made the mistake of forgetting the watchful South, and when he did so on one occasion in Chicago with President McKinley in the audience, he hastily interpreted his remarks to meet the complaints of the Birmingham Age-Herald.³⁴

Washington gave a deceptive appearance of bowing to Southern demands. Reconstruction policy, he said, had been "artificial and forced"; a Northern element had used the ignorance of the black race to punish the South; politics drew the Negro's attention from self-help; and a Negro who

³²Spencer, Booker T. Washington and the Negro's Place in American Life, 195-202. Horace Mann Bond declared that Washington failed to achieve these goals but that his elevating influence might be great over the long span. Negro Education in Alabama, 217-225.

³³Up from Slavery (Doubleday, New York, n.d.; 1st ed., 1900), 137, 200-202.

³⁴Ibid., 255-256.

had been a lieutenant-governor during Reconstruction was deservedly a bricklayer's helper later on.³⁵ He agreed that the Negro sought advice from Southern white friends on everything but voting, and that suffrage tests were needed.³⁶ At least half the reliable colored men in any Southern town, he said, were artisans who had learned their trades under slavery;³⁷ it was sad, on the other hand, to observe a young Negro "with grease on his clothing . . . and weeds in the yard, engaged in studying a French grammar."³⁸

In preparing his speech to be delivered at the Atlanta Exposition in 1895 Washington was "painfully conscious of the fact" that "an ill-timed address" would prevent any similar invitation "to a black man for years to come." Uppermost in his mind was a need to "cement the friendship of the races."³⁹ The address was, therefore, practically a distillation of Southern thought on the Negro question. The wisest of his race understood the folly of agitating for social equality, he said. It was right that the Negro be

³⁵Ibid, 84-85.

³⁶Ibid, 236-237.

³⁷Ibid, 121.

³⁸Ibid., 122.

³⁹Ibid., 211-213.

prepared for the exercise of privileges before he demanded them. The Negro would be patient and sympathetic in "your effort to work out the great and intricate problem which God has laid at the doors of the South." Ignorant, the Negro began "at the top instead of at the bottom." The Negro was given a "chance in the commercial world" in the South. "Cast down your bucket among these people who have, without strikes and labor wars, tilled your fields, cleared your forests, builded your railroads and cities" No foreigner can approach our devotion. We will "lay down our lives, if need be, in defense of yours" We accept segregation: "In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress."⁴⁰

This speech was a national sensation, probably because it appeared to say that Negroes were satisfied with subordination. America knew that the Negro had reason to be bitter, and that Washington might possibly jettison his well-known policy and publicly demand justice. When he did not, nervousness and a sense of guilt were followed by elation.⁴¹ Everyone from President Cleveland down to the lowliest white

⁴⁰Ibid., 218-225.

⁴¹Ibid., 225-230.

man could rejoice in Washington's trial and acquittal of the white American. The "Negro problem" was being solved in a satisfactory manner and there was no need for a painful attack on caste. Racial and sectional harmony prevailed--so said the outstanding Negro leader.

But in this address Washington objected to injustice, though in a low key in order to **avoid** exciting hostility among the dominant whites. He looked forward to the time when the South would "administer absolute justice, in a willing obedience . . . to the mandate of the law."⁴² Furthermore, he spoke of his people as beginning at the bottom, implying that they would not be satisfied to remain stationary.⁴³

On other occasions, Washington stated that some carpetbaggers were honorable and competent;⁴⁴ that the Negro would not make the mistakes he had during Reconstruction if again permitted to exercise his political rights; that franchise tests should apply with absolute honesty to both races alike, because the present system was unfair to the black man, to the white man, and to the rest of the Union;⁴⁵ that segregation

⁴²Ibid., 224.

⁴³Ibid., 218.

⁴⁴Ibid., 85-86.

⁴⁵Ibid., 87.

on trains should not be permitted;⁴⁶ that little, prejudiced men were barred from what was highest and best in the world;⁴⁷ that a race willing to die for its country during the Spanish-American war should be given the opportunity to live for its country in peace;⁴⁸ that the Louisiana Constitutional Convention ought not to disfranchise the black man.⁴⁹

Though Washington appeared to accept the Southern white as the Negro's master, and seemed to encourage Negroes to vote Democratic, he himself voted Republican and against the "solid South" and used all his influence to maintain the alliance between the Republican party and the Negroes.⁵⁰ Moreover, he dined with President Roosevelt and raised a storm in doing so. Washington, in short, condemned the Southern social order, and employed the strategy of weakness in patient warfare against the powerful white caste. Thus he adjusted his educational system to restrictive conditions laid down by a hostile South.

* * *

Though many people were persuaded that Negroes should be encouraged to give up their ambition for higher education

⁴⁶Ibid., 100-101.

⁴⁷Ibid., 229.

⁴⁸Ibid., 255.

⁴⁹Ibid., 318.

⁵⁰Spencer, Booker T. Washington and the Negro's Place in American Life, 167-168.

in favor of the manual arts, various Negroes and Northerners and a few Southerners called attention to the tendency of this policy to bar Negroes from cultural and professional achievement and to prepare them for permanent subjection. These dissenters insisted that traditional university education be made available to the blacks.

Colored leaders in Texas saw the movement toward manual training as an effort to keep Negroes in a position of peonage. A Committee on Industrial Education in 1900 at the Colored Teachers' Association pronounced the view that practical training was most suitable for the colored man as "unjust, illogical, spurious, and antagonistic to American peace and prosperity, and entirely out of harmony with the soundest philosophy of the age. We disagree with those who hold that conditions force us to take the lower order of occupations exclusively."⁵¹

In replying to a questionnaire of the New Orleans Times-Democrat touching on industrial education, Bishop A. Grant, a Negro, went to the heart of the question: "The Negro should not be educated as a race but as anybody else."⁵² The Negro clergyman, Charles T. Walker, in an address

⁵¹Cited by Eby, The Development of Education in Texas, 271.

⁵²January 24, 1887, in "Education of the Colored Race," Report of the Secretary of Interior, 2091.

before the National Education Association, stated that in addition to skilled craftsmen the Negro race needed the "most highly educated men and women to train and prepare the future leaders of the race."⁵³

The Negro scholar, W. E. B. Du Bois, the leading critic of Booker T. Washington's kind of education, resented the emphasis upon industrial training as obscuring the Negro's desires for professional, literary, and artistic distinction, and as tending to keep Negroes on the mudsill of the social order. Unlike Southerners who argued that Tuskegee Institute was adapted to the nature of the Negro, Du Bois maintained that it nurtured him in the psychology of slavery, and violated the rights of the "talented Tenth." Du Bois believed that the Radical effort to open higher education to Negroes had been "the salvation of the South and the Negro." When reaction triumphed, "there was already present a little group of trained leadership which grew by leaps and bounds." Had it not been for the Negro school and college, "the Negro would, to all intents and purposes, have been driven back to slavery."⁵⁴

⁵³"The Educational Needs of the Southern Negro," National Educational Association, Journal of Proceedings and Addresses, 1903 (Winona, Minnesota, 1903), 127.

⁵⁴Black Reconstruction, 667. See also, Curti, Social Ideas of American Educators, 304-305, and Spencer, Booker T. Washington and the Negro's Place in American Life, 154-173.

Some Northern leaders supported the demands of colored people for traditional college, as well as industrial, education. S. W. Powell pointed out that Southerners promoted manual training in an attempt to destroy academic institutions which challenged their conception of Negro capacity, and as a means to give the Negro just enough education "to keep him from voting on the side of anarchy and to make him more efficient as a hewer of wood and a drawer of water."⁵⁵ He himself favored industrial education mixed with liberal doses of intellectual and moral training as a practical thing.

William T. Harris, the influential Northern educator, also warned against the attempt to hedge in Negro education. In an address at Atlanta University in 1895 Harris urged Negro students to strive even for achievement in classical studies. Industrial education was appropriate for some Negroes, he admitted, but "the colored man is not always going to be the person who draws water and cuts wood; he is going to help on with civilization." If this were so, he needed to learn mathematics, science, literature, and language.⁵⁶ A generation earlier the Rev. A. D. Mayo had

⁵⁵"Industrial Education for the Negro: Is It a Craze?" Century Magazine, XVI (1889), 472-473.

⁵⁶Higher Education for Negroes, An Address Made to the Students of Atlanta University, October 29, 1895, (n.p., n.d.).

taken the same position before the National Education Association.⁵⁷

Not a few critics penetrated the South's subterfuge in seeming to support Negro education by agitating for manual training. They saw plainly that the prime motive of many of those who most strongly advocated industrial education was the conviction that the Negro was and should be doomed to servitude. The New York Independent declared:

This is a denial of the manhood of the Negro, of his equality in any sense with the white man, and of his right to compete with him in any of the higher walks of life. The Negro is not to hold office; he is not to vote as other men vote, freely, and have his vote fairly counted; he is not to be called upon to contribute anything in the way of brain force to the national life; he is not to aspire to professional attainment; he must lay aside all ambition for literary or artistic recognition, and must be absolutely content with his lot as a servant. If educated at all, he must regard it as great boon to be allowed to read and write and have a little smattering of a knowledge of numbers.⁵⁸

* * *

Although Negroes maintained their right to higher education, industrial training prevailed to a large degree in the state schools for Negroes and was included to a lesser degree in the private institutions. Furthermore, except for

⁵⁷"Education of the Colored Race," Report of the Secretary of Interior, 2091.

⁵⁸Quoted in Liberia, Bulletin No. 10 (February, 1897), 71-72.

a few universities of the caliber of Howard, Fisk, and Atlanta, Negro institutions of higher learning, both state and private, were financially impoverished, inadequately staffed, and pitifully small in enrollment. Most of them did not deserve the designation of college. In few of them were more than ten per cent of the students doing college work.⁵⁹ In 1914 the General Education Board noted that the total number of competent students was so small that there were Negro colleges with as few as eight or ten students; elementary and secondary education had to be their principal concern.⁶⁰ Of eight Negro colleges in Texas in 1914-1915, only three were accredited by the state, and their total enrollment, excluding elementary and high school pupils, was 129.⁶¹

The South's refusal to jettison its intellectual baggage when its slaves gained freedom conditioned its educational treatment of the freedmen. Developing a social policy which consigned the Negroes to a subservient caste, differing little from that worked out in the Old South, Southern

⁵⁹General Education Board. The General Education Board: An Account of Its Activities, 1902-1914, 203-205; Charles Forster Smith, "The Negro in Nashville," Century Magazine, XXX (1891), 154-156; Eby, Development of Education in Texas, 272-278; Wharton, The Negro in Mississippi, 251-253.

⁶⁰The General Education Board: An Account of Its Activities, 206.

⁶¹Eby, Development of Education in Texas, 272.

leaders repeated and adapted the old phrases, and fought to hold on to the old order. It was impossible to educate freedmen and their descendants in company with whites and on the same principles, and continue at the same time to reserve the master's privileges. The South therefore created a special educational establishment designed to confirm the Negro in his status of subordination. This was done in a context of Negro striving encouraged by more or less feeble support from the federal government and private organizations, and aided by a spirit of humanity in the South.

PART IV

LABOR

CHAPTER XII

NATURE OF THE NEGRO LABORER

Negroes had been created as instruments of drudgery--such was the claim of white men. Wishing to work the Negro, and having the power to do so, they invented the myth that Negroes had great capacity for hard labor under the direction of white intelligence, but would if left to their own devices flounder in a welter of barbarism.

All held that the Negro had no place in the social order except as a common laborer, because his place was fixed by inferiority of intellect and character.¹ Real and imagined peculiarities of anatomical structure--skull, jaw, hair, skin, and heel--were still offered as demonstrating the Negro's inferiority. Hilary Herbert in 1900, for example, informed a gathering of Southern politicians, clergymen, and educators that the closure of sutures in the skulls of Negroes stopped their intellectual development at the age of fourteen.² Generally, the Southerner's

¹William Matthews, "The Negro Intellect," North American Review, CXLIX (1898), 91-92.

²"The Problems That Present Themselves," in Race Problems in the South, 31.

presumed intimate knowledge of the colored man's nature was about all that was required to sustain whatever assertion seemed fitting, under the particular circumstances, to justify the Negro's role as laborer.

The improperly controlled Negro exhibited defects, it was said, that made him a threat to himself and a nuisance to the white man. One major defect was a lack of providence that left him content to earn his living merely, "taking no heed for the morrow, accumulating nothing, and still continuing a tiller, not a proprietor, of the soil."³ His natural weakness prevented his taking advantage of opportunities offered by society to rise in this world. As a consequence, plantations changed hands, but not to black hands.⁴

No wonder! The freedman shirked work, and many, even of those who did work on the same place for years, spent their earnings in dissipation, lived squalidly, and laid up nothing for family, for illness, or for old age. They would not raise their own food on land allotted them for that purpose. They would not provide themselves with

³De Leon, "The New South," Harper's Magazine, XLVII (1874), 271.

⁴Ibid., 272-273.

suitable clothing, but would "rather crouch over the fire on a cold day than clothe themselves warmly and work."⁵

Doubtless idleness seemed to be a right of freedom to ex-slaves, especially as they anticipated coming into possession of their masters' farms, but they quickly met disappointment and soon were forced to hire their labor out.⁶ But it seemed to the Southerner that Negroes indulged themselves in luxuries and sustained one another's idleness because of racial weakness.⁷ One observer reported seeing swarms of Negroes of whom only a few were coaxed or compelled to work by hunger, and even they were insolent and aggressive.⁸ Complaints, loud and frequent, were heard that the freedman would not work, that he occupied without cultivating the soil, and that rich land was "relapsing into brush-wood and jungle."⁹ This was especially true, it was said, in a few unfortunate localities where the

⁵Ibid., 273.

⁶De Forest, Union Officer in the Reconstruction, 131-133

⁷Joseph Le Conte, The Race Problems in the South (New York, 1892), passim.

⁸De Leon, "Ruin and Reconstruction of the Southern States: A Record of Two Tours in 1868 and 1873," Southern Magazine, XIV (1874), 24-35.

⁹De Leon, "The New South," Harper's Magazine, XLVII (1874), 271.

Negro had gained control of the land and made no use of it, living merely by fishing and hunting.¹⁰ The people of Charleston, South Carolina, referred to nearby Beaufort as the "capital of the Kingdom of Dahomey." This alleged reversion to primitive civilization had been hastened, supposedly, by tutelage that fixed in the Negro the belief that if he "will just sit still and open his mouth, Uncle Samuel will see that he is fed."¹¹

The Negro did not work as hard as in slave days. In the rich plantation country across the river from Natchez there was a decided drop in efficiency of Negro labor following the war.¹² A Northern visitor who questioned an old driver, then foreman, on a Louisiana sugar plantation concerning the decline in the freedman's labor received this exaggeration in answer: "Nuffin like it boss; befo de wah, de plow gang had to be in de field long befo' sun up, all drawn up in a line and every man a-hold

¹⁰King, "The Great South: The South Carolina Problem: The Epoch of Transition," Scribner's Monthly, VIII (1874), 129-160.

¹¹Shaler, "An Ex-Southerner in South Carolina," Atlantic Monthly, XXVI (1870), 60-61.

¹²King, "The Great South: Down the Mississippi--The Labor Question--Arkansas," Scribner's Monthly, VIII (1874), 652.

of his plow, waitin' for de first daylight to start. And de hoe gang was dah, every man a-leanin' on his hoe, ready to start at de word jist as soon as dey could rightly see de rows of cane."¹³

Booker T. Washington explained postwar laziness among his people by their environment. The Negro, Washington said, had worked under protest as a slave, and spent much effort in planning how to avoid it. He saw that the white man, held up as embodying "the highest type of civilization," did not himself labor; "hence he argued that the less work he did, the more nearly he would be like a white man." So the Negro "always associated labor with toil, drudgery, something to be escaped."¹⁴ Washington's explanation was hardly acceptable to Southern whites.

Freedmen, the whites said, being incapable of profitable labor on their own, worked one-half as much as when slaves. Not only were they lazy, but "they also manifested an uncontrollable tendency" to roam about the country. They considered no agreement to be binding and were restless, suspicious, and untrustworthy as laborers. At a crisis of the season, the hands would disappear,

¹³Eugene V. Smalley, "Sugar Making in Louisiana," Century Magazine, XIII (1887), 110.

¹⁴"The Awakening of the Negro," Atlantic Monthly, LXXVIII (1896), 326-327.

"leaving their employer to do the best he could; and the best he could would be to hire other negro laborers, who, in their turn, would disappear when their labor was necessary."¹⁵ The result was exasperation, sometimes ruin. Planters felt they had a grievance for which there was no remedy--except to regain more control over the Negroes. Joel Chandler Harris was more hopeful, believing that the Negroes were simply testing their freedom before settling down.¹⁶

Freedmen also spent much time frolicking when their labor was needed in the fields. A South Carolina planter reported that his hands neglected the corn during the hoeing season, and could never recover lost ground afterwards. "It was no use to order or scold," he said, "they were disobedient, sulky, and insolent. As for frolicking, why, Sir, from fifty to seventy darkies pass my house every night, going into the village. The next day they are, of course, fit for nothing."¹⁷ Field hands all went to town on Saturday, a rural editor complained, almost as a

¹⁵Joel Chandler Harris, "The Future of the Negro," North American Review, CXXXIX (1884), 87.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Cited by De Forest, Union Officer in the Reconstruction, 97.

religious duty, often to squander their earnings on drink.¹⁸ A month before Christmas they would abandon the fields "to prepare for their annual frolic, and leave their employers with the bag to hold, and fill, too."¹⁹ Doubtless freedmen, who had become accustomed under slavery to having everything planned for them, were inclined to plant a crop, then gaily permit the land to raise "a larger crop of weeds than corn."²⁰

The freedwoman was not satisfied with an occasional frolic. Why should she now toil along the cotton row, under the hot sun, driving a hoe through stubborn weeds? Let the planter resent her airs. She aspired to be like white women, and dawdle and gossip. The "aggregate opinion of planters" was that freedwomen had become "chiefly consumers and drones." Slovenly as housekeepers, they neglected their children and failed to instruct them in habits of industry. Accordingly, the younger generation was not so industrious nor honest as their elders, whose habits were formed before the war.²¹

¹⁸Carrollton West Alabamian, April 22, 1870.

¹⁹Ibid., March 24, 1873.

²⁰De Forest, A Union Officer in the Reconstruction, 96.

²¹Gayarre, "The Southern Question," North American Review, CXXV (1877), 488; De Forest, A Union Officer in the Reconstruction, 94; De Leon, "The New South," Harper's Magazine, XLVII (1874), 484; Tindall, South Carolina Negroes, 95.

A few Southerners imagined that, removed from the salutary control of slavery, the Negro would not long survive. Paul Barringer remarked that the complement to the survival of the fittest was the death of the unfit. Thus Negroes "with the one hundred million dollar education" faced imminent extinction." Since emancipation, the Negro had been subjected to the "remorseless laws of nature, and being unfit to meet their demands here, he from that day, began to fall." Evidence to this effect was the well-known decline in the Negro's capacity for labor, and his accompanying impoverishment and increased death rate. The force of slavery, "unobtrusive but steady and persistent force, was necessary to the continuance in well-doing of this race of pagans."²²

Most whites agreed with Barringer that Negroes if left alone would revert to the natural idleness which characterized the race in its pristine home in Africa. Emancipation having, in their view, validated this prophecy, they now reiterated the convenient theory that it was their duty, slavery or no slavery, to force Negroes to work. Like their ancestors, the inherently defective freedmen

²²"The Negro and the Social Order," Race Problems of the South, 182-193.

must be subjected to extraordinary control. One planter explained that he "always proceeded on the basis that the black man was an inferior being who had been peculiarly unfitted for what he was now called upon to undertake."²³ The most sacred of rights, according to the Southern geologist Joseph Le Conte, was "the right of the weak and the ignorant to the control and guidance of the strong and wise." Thus even in 1892 some form of control by the white race was "still absolutely necessary."²⁴ In 1900, the Reverend D. Clay Lilly urged Southerners to remember that their Negroes were mere children who labored well for others under kind discipline but were unequal to the grave responsibilities imposed upon them by freedom.²⁵

* * *

Whites believed that Negroes when again brought under control, with their defective tendencies held in check, made good laborers. This point of view explains why the Negro, though damned, often was praised as well. For agricultural labor, one Southerner wrote, the Negro

²³Cited in King, "The Great South: Louisiana," Scribner's Monthly, VII (1873), 13.

²⁴The Race Problems in the South, 360-361.

²⁵"The Negro in Relation to Religion," in Race Problems of the South, 118-119.

was incomparably better than the European immigrant, "better even than the olive pig-tails of the Flowery Kingdom." Properly trained, "inoculated therefore with just conceptions of himself and others, and so protected against the malignant views of modern philanthropy," he was still the best farm hand in the world.²⁶ In all kinds of laborious toil Negroes liked to excel, many Southerners agreed. They were unequalled in splitting rails or lifting heavy weights; at home in the fields, gathering sugar cane, picking cotton, hoeing tobacco, or harvesting rice; and performed well in quarries and tobacco warehouses, as stevedores and steamboat hands, or "indeed in all species of employment where great muscular strength is required or great heat is to be endured."²⁷

The Negro's ability to work long hours under a hot sun was a universally accepted theory. The African alone could "sustain the trials of the summer climate" in the rice country, while no other laborer could compete with

²⁶Puryear, The Public School in Its Relation to the Negro, 20. See also New Orleans Crescent, October 18, 1865 and January 6, 1868; Sunny South, May 7, 1888; New Orleans Picayune, August 28, 1891; Duke, Reminiscences, 242.

²⁷Killebrew, "How to Deal with the Negro," Southern States Farm Magazine, V (1898), 484.

him in the production of other Southern staples.²⁸ Given "a warm back and a full belly" he was capable of wonderful endurance, and he worked with good humor under conditions in which the white man experienced insupportable physical discomfort.²⁹

When engaged in hard labor, the black was a cheery, capricious being who seemed entirely devoid of ambition. Having the kindest disposition of all workers, he alone among laborers was docile in temper, and looked always on the brightest side of life.³⁰ And the Negro was constant. He did not take offense nor seek revenge; among all the races there was none so loyal. Inured from infancy to hard work, "trained by the high intelligence of the dominating Anglo-Saxon man, and accustomed to the protecting care of the white people,"³¹ the Southern Negro proved by his

²⁸King, "The Great South: The South Carolina Problem: The Epochs of Transition," Scribner's Monthly, VIII (1874), 142; Killebrew, "How to Deal with the Negro," Southern States Farm Magazine, V (1898), 484.

²⁹West Alabamian, March 19, 1873.

³⁰King, "The Great South: A Ramble in Virginia: From Bristol to the Sea," Scribner's, VII (1874), 674; Killebrew, "How to Deal with the Negro," Southern States Farm Magazine, V (1898), 484; J. R. Stratton, "Address," in Race Problems in the South, 150.

³¹Killebrew, "How to Deal with the Negro," Southern States Farm Magazine, V (1898), 485.

fidelity, his incomparable courtesy of manner, and his accommodating disposition that he occupied his true place in society.

Great emphasis was placed on the Negro's happiness and fidelity. The function of this element in the Southern pattern of thought was illustrated in the story about a clergyman from South Carolina, whose everlasting topic was the felicity of Negroes under slavery. While travelling in England he badgered his company beyond endurance in order to instruct them on the happiness of slaves in South Carolina. Losing patience, an Englishman asked, "My dear Sir, if things are as you say, why not go back to South Carolina and become a slave?" The high-toned Carolinian flew into a rage and challenged the Englishman to a duel, but was not given satisfaction.³²

In 1900 the Southerner still believed that only the closely regulated Negro could be happy. In that year Clifton R. Breckinridge of Arkansas, a former member of Congress, asserted that the Negro regained his lost happiness when the whites "forged anew" restraints from

³²De Forest, A Union Officer in the Reconstruction, 176-177.

which he had been released by carpetbaggers. "The negro knows his place," Breckinridge claimed, "and he is happiest when assigned to it."³³

³³"Lynching as a Penalty," in Race Problems of the South, 174-177.

CHAPTER XIII

MIGRATION OF LABOR

Intimately associated with the labor question was the South's agitation for immigrants. Throughout the nineteenth century, Southerners conducted a campaign, varying in intensity though weakening as the century wore on, to attract white immigrants. As voters they would guarantee that "Negro rule" would become an impossibility; as laborers they would force the Negro to work humbly at his appointed task, if he wished to work at all.

Newspapers early began agitating for immigration. The Charleston Courier, in late summer, 1865, pointed out the "political and practical" advantages that immigrant labor could bring to South Carolina, and gave its support to the immigration movements then being initiated in South Carolina, Georgia, Virginia, and other Southern states.¹ In October of that year the Courier declared that South Carolina would be ruined if it continued to depend upon the unreliable and unstable freedmen for labor. To talk now of the superiority of black over white labor was idle; the free black had been tried and found wanting.² By 1869

¹August 19, 1865.

²October 3, 1865.

the New Orleans Picayune believed immigration to be necessary; the only question was how to procure it.³ During the summer of that year the Wilmington Journal demanded immigration of white laborers despite the opposition of Radicals and Negroes.⁴ Early in 1870 the Carrollton West Alabamian hailed the arrival of Danes, Swedes, Norwegians, Swiss, and Irish in Mississippi "as the dawn of a new era in Southern labor." The men were "brawny looking fellows, giving every indication of usage to labor and the will to work."⁵ The West Alabamian in mourning the death of the scientist Matthew Fontained Maury in 1873 praised the famous oceanographer as one of the "most practical and most influential advocates of immigration."⁶ This weekly kept up an agitation for the "intelligent labor" of white immigrants, arguing that such a population would promote "all those enterprises that attend white civilization."⁷

A minister of the Methodist Church North in Tennessee ironically observed that the "proud Southron proposed to

³June 9, 1869.

⁴August 24, 1869.

⁵February 2, 1870.

⁶Ibid., February 19, 1873.

⁷Ibid., January 6, 1874.

lay aside to some extent his prejudices, and invite" the immigrant to come and bring his skilled labor--and money--with him.⁸ In response to the immigration fervor immigrant associations sprang up in the states, and even localities, among them sparsely populated Sebastian County, Arkansas, formed their own societies.⁹

Farmers' associations joined in the clamor. The Alabama State Planters' Society, in February, 1871, called for skilled white labor to immigrate South. An address issued by the Society bewailed the "sloth, waste, and dishonesty" resulting from the recent great changes and derangement in the labor system, and noted that labor was scarce, dear, and unsatisfactory. But if the planter would employ fewer workers and buy machinery, instead of "being, as now, at the mercy of his hands, he will have an overabundant supply of labor from which to choose, and will, in that case, be master of the situation." Pointing out

⁸Cobleigh, "Southern Reconstruction," Methodist Quarterly Review, XLII (1870), 393.

⁹Fort Smith Herald, June 26, 1875; Charles H. Wesley, Negro Labor in the United States, 1850-1925 (New York, 1927), 195. County immigration societies in Mississippi accomplished little or nothing. Wharton, Negroes in Mississippi, 102. See also Rowland T. Berthoff, "Southern Attitudes Toward Immigration, 1865-1914," Journal of Southern History, XVII (1951), 328-330, 336-338.

that Western states were attracting foreigners, the Planters Association requested Alabama to create a bureau of immigration.¹⁰

The South could be expected to abandon its plan to replace the Negro with the foreigner, the Southern Review declared in 1876, if the Negro would only put himself in right relation with the white employers:

They own the land, they need labor, and he . . . must have employment. His welfare is intimately connected with, and must depend on, their prosperity. If he thus meets their wants, and supplies, reliably, a labor so necessary, he insures not only that they will not seek other labor, but . . . having a useful place for his race, they will not invite any other to come; and by this accord he is guarded against a competition which otherwise they would be compelled, in self preservation, to invite, nay, to strive for by every appliance they can invent, and which would destroy him.¹¹

Slavery having been abolished, Southerners imagined that immigrants would find the South attractive.¹² General T. M. Logan believed that immigration, formerly the source of the North's wealth, would flow South because free labor,

¹⁰Carrollton West Alabamian, April 19, 1871.

¹¹"The African in the United States," XIV (1874), 152. See also Charleston Journal of Commerce, October 3, 1876.

¹²Colonel F. Schaler, "Immigration of Capital and of Population to the South," Southern Magazine, X (1872), 545.

hitherto unable to compete with slave labor, was no longer turned away by such a barrier, though he admitted some "retarding influences, particularly those resulting from the presence of the colored race in the South."¹³ It was soon discovered that free Negroes who were practically slaves presented a stumbling block to immigration, but efforts to bring in whites went on.

In January, 1870, planters in Alabama brought in a "force of industrious laborers sufficient to pick their cotton and grind their cane independent of the unreliable negroes."¹⁴ Here was an experiment with migratory labor, such as the West later used in harvesting wheat, foreshadowing a major trend of the future. Louisiana sugar planters imported 700 Portuguese in 1880 to replace refractory Negroes, and treated them like Negroes.¹⁵ In the winter of 1881 and for the three following winters Italian laborers who worked in summer on road construction were employed by operators of South Carolina phosphate

¹³"The Southern Industrial Prospect," Harper's Magazine, LII (1876), 592-593.

¹⁴Carrollton West Alabamian, January 26, 1870.

¹⁵Shugg, Origin of Class Struggle in Louisiana, 265-266; Berthoff, "Southern Attitudes Toward Immigration, 1865-1914," Journal of Southern History, XVII (1951), 331.

mines; the Italians "have a capital effect on the negroes, and show them, in a practical way, that the miners are not alone dependent upon them for labor."¹⁶ But in 1890 an observer noted that the Italians had been replaced by Negroes "who for climatic and other reasons are better adapted to the work."¹⁷

* * *

The most striking illustration of the South's desire to force the Negroes to work, or to replace them, was the movement to import cheap Oriental labor. Western railroad builders worked gangs of coolies, why could not the South? For a time Southerners wondered if they had found a new group of laborers. In the fall of 1865 the New Orleans Crescent suggested that coolie labor was cheaper than Negro labor, and was acceptable to the North. But, the journal warned, the "meddling spirit of Massachusetts" might inaugurate a fresh agitation and give the Chinese all the privileges of citizenship. As an early resuscitation of civil law could be anticipated, and difficulties in the way of "applying negro labor to the fields" would be removed,

¹⁶Cited in Tindall, South Carolina Negroes, 126.

¹⁷Ibid., 126.

there was no reason to add to the superfluous "colored and mongrel races" in the South.¹⁸

But radical reconstruction replaced military government, and a commercial convention in Memphis gave impetus to the Chinese immigration movement.¹⁹ In November, 1868, the committee on labor and agriculture of the District Agricultural Convention, Wilmington, reported that, although Swiss immigrants in North Carolina were "devoted to the interest of their employer" and performed twice as much work as the Negro, Chinese were recommended for rice culture because of their "remarkable powers of endurance and adaptability to the malaria of our rice fields and swamps."²⁰

The great advantage of "John Chinaman" was that he worked steadily and faithfully and made a good living on wages that would starve a white man, or even a Negro. Moreover, unlike the white immigrant from the North or from Europe, he would not seek to become an independent farmer, or, if he did, the South could expect support from the other sections in thwarting this ambition.

¹⁸October 27, 1865.

¹⁹New Orleans Picayune, July 30, 1869; Wesley, Negro Labor in the United States, 196-197.

²⁰Excerpts printed in Wilmington Journal, November 26, 1868.

The experience of the last few years, a Georgia editor noted in 1869, proved the futility of attempting to replace Negro labor with European peasants. At the close of the first year the immigrant set out on his own; thus the planter lost his outlay and became merely "a successful immigrant agent." But the Negro was lazy, was being slain by whiskey and disease, or went off to town. The solution to this problem was to import indentured Asiatics, who were docile, cheap, and more skillful than Negroes. The "descendants of Shem" were vastly superior to the descendants of Ham, and could be trained up as the Negro had been. Furthermore, Chinese, like Negroes, were "decreed to be hewers of wood and drawers of water." There was, however, some danger the Radicals might get hold of them as they had the Negroes.²¹

The Shreveport Southwestern insisted that the Negro could leave the Chinese far behind in cotton-picking, as he had been trained from childhood in that art; nevertheless, even though Negro labor was best, it was diminishing, and Chinese coolies would make excellent replacements.²² A "Southern" reader of this journal insisted that Chinese were better workers than Negroes and were adapted to the

²¹Cuthbert (Georgia) Appeal, Clipped in Fort Smith Herald, August 14, 1869.

²²June 19, 1869; see also August 8, 1869.

cultivation of cotton, corn, and sugar, while their women made excellent domestics.²³ The editor conceded that the Negroes' plan to bring about the equality of races through subdivision of land might be defeated by the importation of gangs of coolies. "Every distinctive feature of our old civilization, which in its conservatism, looked to landed estates . . . to sustain capital," was threatened by the freedmen, he observed.²⁴

The New Orleans Picayune thought that the rapid completion of the Central Pacific demonstrated the energy of the Chinese, and that his work could be had for a "merely nominal sum."²⁵ The Wilmington Journal announced that since the cost of Chinese labor was no more than a third the cost of Negro labor, the full demands of the South could be satisfied "at rates which would render it the cheapest and best labor in the world, and thus add enormously to the productive wealth and improvement of our section."²⁶ In addition, the Chinese "do not fraternize with Americans, and never intermarry" with them.²⁷ The Shreveport

²³Ibid., August 10, 1869.

²⁴Ibid., August 27, 1869.

²⁵August 6, 1869.

²⁶September 7, 1869.

²⁷Ibid., October 5, 1869.

South-Western complained of a lack of public spirit indicated by the fact that no attempts were being made to import Chinese. "All will admit the necessity for more labor; many will next year adopt any shift to entice their neighbors' hands from them; none deny but there will be a general scramble for freedmen, and at prices which will be ruinous to planters."²⁸ The Galveston Civilian reported that a three-months' experiment with Chinese labor proved it a success, and promised a way to revive the "drooping industry" of the coast counties. A group of Swedes, ordinary immigrants, left because of hot weather but Chinese remained steadily at work, willing and sober.²⁹ "Another warning to the Negro," an editor wrote, "the Chinese are coming."³⁰ A convention of Negroes in New Orleans in October, 1869, taking such threats seriously, opposed the introduction of Chinese into Louisiana.³¹

In the event, planters could not compete with western railroads for Chinese labor. And Chinese had no

²⁸September 17, 1869.

²⁹Clipped in Carrollton West Alabamian, May 11, 1870.

³⁰Ibid., July 13, 1870.

³¹Wesley, Negro Labor in the United States, 197.

history of servitude in the South to render them as amenable as freedmen. The Carrollton West Alabamian, in abandoning its propaganda for coolie labor, quoted its most influential source, General R. E. Lee, as against Chinese immigration.³²

A planter dampened enthusiasm by reporting that he had experimented with Chinese from California in 1872 only to find them less manageable than Negroes. They had been quiet and orderly enough, he explained, "after culling and expelling the idlers and gamblers" who debauched the others, but a "batch of Galicians" were much superior.³³

The Charleston News and Courier, like other journals, at last discovered that the Chinese were unfit to live in the South. In California, this newspaper reported, Chinese filled the asylums and hospitals at the expense of the white taxpayer, and they were "incompetent to share with the latter the burden of civil or military duties." Their houses were dens of iniquity. Because it was impossible for the two races to coalesce, the Californians had rightly determined that "the Chinese pest must be utterly stamped out."³⁴ The Fort Smith Herald, also a former advocate

³²July 20, 1870.

³³De Leon, "The New South," Harper's Magazine, XLVII (1874), 273.

³⁴May 30, 1876.

of coolie labor in the cotton fields, in 1879 urged the nation to bar Chinese, and denounced industrialists for sacrificing the country's welfare for cheap labor.³⁵

With victory over the Negro assured after the fall of Radical reconstruction, the Chinese lost their attractiveness as laborers. Fear of adding a "yellow peril" to the South's "black peril" doubtless had some effect. The Chinese experiment, though it collapsed speedily, did make Southerners aware that racist allies waited to be cultivated all over the nation and particularly in California.³⁶

* * *

Southerners had never really wanted Chinese, but they did fondly hope to obtain appreciable numbers of white immigrants. Edward King noticed, however, that they were "totally unconscious of the fact that they can never secure white immigration, so much desired, until they raise the status of the laboring man."³⁷ White labor had proved a failure because the laborers were not "properly treated."

³⁵March 8, 1879.

³⁶Berthoff, "Southern Attitudes Toward Immigration, 1865-1914," Journal of Southern History, XVII (1951), 359.

³⁷King, "The Great South: Notes on Kentucky and Tennessee," Scribner's Monthly, IX (1874), 145.

Offered strong inducements to come, they found conditions so bad that they soon gave "up the experiment."³⁸ A correspondent to the Louisville Home and Farm agreed: "Can it be that we are understood to mean that we want the emigrant merely as a drawer of water and a hewer of wood?"³⁹ Judge Albion W. Tourgee, erstwhile carpetbagger in North Carolina, scornfully explained why immigrants could not be attracted: "The negro will work more hours for less money, wait longer for his pay, live in cheaper houses, endure more hardships, claim fewer privileges, and increase more rapidly than the northern or foreign white laborer."⁴⁰

Southern whites were inclined to offer a different explanation why immigrants did not come South. The editor of the West Alabamian, once an active propagandist for immigration, wrote that changing the color of the laborer's skin would not, as some imagined, overcome the depression of 1873. Indeed, "no day laborer can compete with the negro

³⁸King, "The Great South: Down the Mississippi--The Labor Question--Arkansas," Scribner's Monthly, VIII (1874), 649. Italians found that many native whites regarded them as another inferior people to be disciplined. Berthoff, "Southern Attitudes Toward Immigration, 1865-1914," Journal of Southern History, XVII (1951), 344.

³⁹March 15, 1880.

⁴⁰"Shall White Minorities Rule?" Forum, VII (1889), 146.

in the employment of the former slaveholder." The Negro's wants were few and his endurance great. Admittedly he was "treacherous and ungrateful, and idle, and worthless generally," "an inferior being to those amongst whom Providence has cast his lot," but hirelings of the white race were "no less treacherous," and were "the most objectionable employees." The better class of immigrants went west to take up land, while the others, ignorant and lazy, made "more unreliable laborers in the North than Negroes in the South." Incessant immigration to the South would be ruinous, for the region was not a manufacturing or food producing area but a cotton country, and "experience has taught the world that the successful cultivation of this crop is a science only appreciated by Southern born planters and their slaves [sic]."⁴¹

Edward De Leon thought that the South was obliged to give up its schemes of immigration because of the unwillingness of the foreigner to work alongside the Negro.⁴² Robert L. Dabney asserted that the reason white immigrants did not compete with Negroes was that they could not. "They had neither the muscle nor the industry."

⁴¹March 19, 1873.

⁴²"The New South," Harper's Magazine, XLVII (1874), 271.

The idea that white laborers avoided the social degradation of working alongside Negroes was nothing "but a myth." The simple fact was that Negroes were perfect laborers. In the old South it had invariably been true that Southern contractors with hired slaves completed contracts "more rapidly, more peaceably and with better net profits" than Northerners who brought down white labor for the same purpose. The difference was in the quality of the labor.⁴³

* * *

The failures born of numerous attempts to obtain reliable labor to carry on large enterprises led to equally unsuccessful efforts to secure immigration of farmers rather than laborers. The "Louisiana Emigration and Homestead Company," directed by General P. G. T. Beauregard and other prominent citizens, organized a great campaign in 1873 to regenerate the State's economic and political life by offering small homesteads as an inducement to prospective farmers from the North.⁴⁴ Pleas for white homesteaders came also from individuals throughout the South. The Louisville

⁴³"What the Negro Did for the Old South," The Southern States Farm Magazine, V (1898), 478-479.

⁴⁴King, "The Great South: Old and New Louisiana: II," Scribner's Monthly, VII (1873), 150; see also his "The Great South: In the Cotton States: II," Scribner's Monthly, VIII (1874), 519-522; Carrollton West Alabamian, March 12, 1873.

Home and Farm provided a clearing house of information in its "Letters to the Editor" section, printing letters praising the advantages of every Southern locality.⁴⁵

The New Orleans Picayune thought freedmen could be drawn to the sugar region as day laborers, "leaving the cotton lands to white immigrants and small farmers"; this would "induce a white immigration of small farmers to supply their places in the cotton region."⁴⁶ The Charleston Courier added that homesteaders might not come unless political privileges and education also were offered them.⁴⁷

New Englanders certainly were not wanted as homesteaders. Though intelligent, energetic, and persevering, their intelligence was "not of that comprehensive character which respects the views of others; their energy is directed chiefly to the attainment of purely selfish ends; and their perseverance is as often marked by an obstinate persistence in wrong as in the pursuit of a rightful end." Their "earnestness degenerates into a spirit of propagandism," which leads them to legislate away the rights of an entire people, while declaring and believing "that they are

⁴⁵June 15, July 1, July 15, August 15, September 1, 1879; April 15, November 1, 1880.

⁴⁶May 7, 1869.

⁴⁷July 16, 1868.

displaying the utmost magnanimity." Such dangerous characters "would not be a desirable acquisition to our population."⁴⁸ Before the war these undesirables sought "intercourse with the servile population in preference to people of their own color." After the war they hurried South as greedy carpetbaggers, swindlers, and revolutionaries.⁴⁹ The South needed immigrants with pride in their race, not those who would form "social equality societies with the native freedmen."⁵⁰

Some advocates of immigration of homesteaders were unaffected by antagonism toward Negroes. The poet Sidney Lanier, who believed that the common interests of farmers would obliterate color in politics, thought that the South would benefit from the rise of the small farm to a position of dominance over the plantation. In the Ocmulgee River region of Georgia, "the whole prospect seems distinctly to yearn for men. Everywhere the huge and gentle slopes kneel and pray for vineyards, for corn fields, for cottages, for spires to rise up from beyond the oak groves."⁵¹ Lanier

⁴⁸New Orleans Crescent, June 25, 1866.

⁴⁹New Orleans Picayune, September 18, 1868.

⁵⁰Ibid., June 13, 1869.

⁵¹"The New South," Scribner's Monthly, XX (1880), 851.

yearned for such communities, ornamented by schools, drama societies, and village orchestras, to develop in the South.⁵² The small farming to be found in their environs

means . . . meat and bread for which there are no notes in bank; pigs fed with home-made corn . . .; yarn spun, stockings knit, butter made and sold (instead of bought); eggs, chickens, peaches, water-melons, the four extra sheep and a little wool; two calves and a beef--all to sell every year, besides a colt who is now suddenly become, all of himself, a good, serviceable horse; the four oxen, who are as good as gifts made by the grass; and a hundred other items, all representing income from a hundred sources to the small farmer, which equally represents outgo to the large farmer. . . .⁵³

* * *

If the presence of Negroes constituted a stumbling block to white immigration, perhaps they should be sent to the North or Latin America or Africa to make way for white people. Negro emigration coupled with white immigration would guarantee white supremacy against the possibility of future revolution, preventing amalgamation absolutely by rendering it physically impossible. Population migration, with the good coming into the South and the bad leaving, was offered as a solution to the problem of caste in Southern democracy, a way to make the South a democracy of Caucasians, who alone were capable of self government.

⁵²Ibid., 845-846.

⁵³Ibid., 843.

Emigration schemes, no matter what the avowed motive, were based on the intention of the whites to control the Negro. If the Negro would not work for the white he should be driven from the white man's country. Even agitation of the question would serve to show the "alien" race that it would be tolerated only if subservient.

Would whites flow to the South if Negroes were expelled? General R. E. Lee, testifying before the Committee of Fifteen on Reconstruction against the proposed amendment enfranchising freedmen, said in May, 1866: "I think it would be better for Virginia if she could get rid of the colored population." "I think Virginia is peculiarly adapted to that kind of labor that would flow into the State, if it were made more attractive by the absence of the colored race."⁵⁴

Southern editors were more direct than Lee. In laying down the hoe and taking up the "howlings of political hustings and caucuses," one wrote, the colored population gained nothing. The Negro's history since the war taught that the sooner he departed the better for the South. "We can see no good end to be subserved by keeping these people among us to foster our enemies and to corrupt our people." Negro farming, or farming with free Negro labor, had proven to be a disastrous experiment. "Sunbeams from cucumbers

⁵⁴Cited in "Monthly Record of Events," Harper's Magazine, XXXII (1886), 807.

are as easy of extraction as thrifty cultivation from the emancipated slave . . . we say again go, GO, GO!"⁵⁵

In February, 1874, the Mobile Register, taking issue with those who argued that Negro emigration threatened the South's productive capacity, argued that Negroes stood in the way of energetic white immigrants.⁵⁶

The Reverend Charles K. Marshall, of Vicksburg, Mississippi, similarly believed that colored labor was inferior and far from being indispensable. As slaves the blacks had been more comfortably fed, clothed, and lodged, and happier, than any other peasantry. Since emancipation they had become less comfortable, less moral, and less happy. They had learned the multiplication table and forgotten their prayers. All told, they were no longer useful to the South.⁵⁷

Many Southerners wondered if the Negro should be exiled from the white South as an alternative to bitter racial wars. E. W. Gilliam saw the Negro race being continually driven back to the "labor line." "Every

⁵⁵Mobile Register, clipped in Carrollton West Alabamian, January 14, 1874.

⁵⁶Clipped in ibid., February 4, 1874.

⁵⁷The Exodus, passim.

higher step of progress, every deepening of aspiration, will carry with it increased humiliations."⁵⁸ Because white repugnance to amalgamation rested upon "a scientific basis," the black race could never be obliterated by absorption, and struggles of growing intensity promising "malignant evils" could be avoided only by colonization.⁵⁹ Gilliam, reminding Northerners of their alarm over the "yellow patch" on the Pacific coast, advocated forcible expulsion of the inferior races from the nation.⁶⁰

The race problem could never be settled as long as Negroes constituted a large element in the South, the Charleston News and Courier asserted.⁶¹ They could not be indefinitely denied the privileges of citizenship against the will of "a section which was victorious in one bloody war on their account, and which persists in regarding them as 'good enough citizens for the South.'"⁶² If the "Force Bill" passed, the News and Courier warned, efforts

⁵⁸"The African Problem," North American Review, CXXXIX (1884), 425.

⁵⁹Ibid., 417-425.

⁶⁰Ibid., 426-429.

⁶¹October 9, 1890.

⁶²January 21, 1891.

to secure the emigration of Negroes must be redoubled. The choice lay between effecting their departure or "keeping them here and trying to make them white people in effect." "Which of the two lies further out of the bounds of sanity is the real question at issue, and on this point we have not a moment's doubt."⁶³

John Temple Graves, perhaps the most eloquent and active champion of Negro deportation, stated at the Montgomery Conference on Race Relations in 1900 that absolute physical separation of the Anglo-Saxon and Negro races was imperative, for the presence of Negroes among whites corrupted politics, throttled independence of thought, and debased labor. There could be "no peace, no purity, no tranquil development, no durable agricultural prosperity . . . no moral growth for the white race outside of separation."⁶⁴ While it was an "indestructible fact" that the white man would never accept the Negro as an equal, the Negro was consumed with an unalterable desire "to be equal in all things to the white man above him."⁶⁵

⁶³October 13, 1892; see also Sunny South, September 16, 1893.

⁶⁴"Address," in Race Problems of the South, 56.

⁶⁵Ibid., 54.

Unless the radical surgery of deportation were performed America would witness the violent destruction of the ambitious but weak race.⁶⁶

Some observers discerned among ex-slaves a "well-nigh universal unrest" which portended general migration. The premature and insignificant movement to Kansas by Southern Negroes around 1879 had been only a symptom of a coming general exodus to Africa. One Southerner expected that by January 1, 1920, the "colored population in the South will scarcely be counted. Perished, migrated, vanished."⁶⁷ J. A. Emerson, contributing to a symposium on the "Future of the Negro," was more realistic, noting that enough ships to take the blacks to Africa could not be found.⁶⁸ Richard L. Greener agreed: "Even if Henry Clay's wished-for bridge of boats could span the Atlantic, and the blacks could be induced to cross in a continuous throng, the daily birth rate would more than balance the daily list of emigrants."⁶⁹ Greener thought, however, that migration

⁶⁶Ibid., 55.

⁶⁷Marshall, The Exodus, 3-7; see also O. F. Cook, "The Negro and African Colonization," Forum, XXVII (1899), 114-119.

⁶⁸North American Review, CXXXIX (1884), 98-99.

⁶⁹Ibid., 89-90.

would be accomplished in the distant future; meanwhile, the State Department ought to open careers to talented Negroes by appointing only blacks to African posts, thereby stimulating trade as well as preparing for the future exodus.⁷⁰

If Africa was too far away, why not the West Indies? The United States might buy land in the Caribbean, or in Mexico, or in Central America. These areas would prove far more attractive than primitive Africa,⁷¹ and a gigantic ship-building program by the nation would not be required to transfer all the blacks to nearby lands.

Because deporting millions of Negroes would be a tremendous undertaking, Senator J. T. Morgan of Alabama, like John Temple Graves, endeavored to make Negro deportation a national crusade;⁷² and Senator Matthew C. Butler of South Carolina introduced a bill to secure federal appropriations to help finance Negro emigration to Africa.⁷³

⁷⁰Ibid., 89.

⁷¹Henry A. Scomp, "Can the Race Problem Be Solved?" Forum, VIII (1889), 372-375.

⁷²Carter G. Woodson, A Century of Migration (Washington, 1918), 148.

⁷³Tindall, South Carolina Negroes, 182.

Little interest in emigration was found among Negroes until Conservative victories announced the advent of official white supremacy.⁷⁴ Then, as a consequence of the triumph of white supremacy, great numbers entertained the prospect of moving to freer atmosphere, and some did join the "Exodus" to Kansas in the late 1870's. A Southern editor was pleased to report that by 1891 a quarter of a million Negroes had gone North and West.⁷⁵ Extreme poverty doubtless restrained many from going to Kansas.⁷⁶ Others must have listened to Frederick Douglass, who argued that the Negro should not abandon his struggle for dignity by leaving the South to men who sought, by elevating the states above the authority of the federal government in matters concerning human rights, to reverse the outcome of the Civil War.⁷⁷ Douglass warned the white Southerner: "Drive out the negro and you drive out Christ, the Bible, and American liberty with him."⁷⁸

⁷⁴Taylor, The Negro in Tennessee, 108-121; Tindall, South Carolina Negroes, 154, 172-173; Woodson, Century of Migration, 126.

⁷⁵Charleston News and Courier, February 25, 1891.

⁷⁶Henry King, "A Year of the Exodus in Kansas," Scribner's Monthly, XX (1880), 213.

⁷⁷Woodson, Century of Migration, 138-139.

⁷⁸"Future of the Negro," North American Review, CXXXIX (1884), 85.

Senator J. T. Morgan answered that a door was opened "by the hand of Providence to the Africans who have gained the powers incident to Christian civilization while in bondage, and are now prepared to enter upon their inheritance." The Free States of the Congo, Morgan thought, made available "to the American negro his first real opportunity to prove himself worthy of the liberties and civilization with which he has been endowed."⁷⁹ The classical scholar Basil Gildersleeve cited a "body of eminent men" to support his claim that "the manifest destiny of slavery in America was the regeneration of Africa."⁸⁰

The Reverend Charles K. Marshall worked up a theory that black men, cramped among a race of giants, would develop in backward Africa: "The Caucasian lifts his unattainable altitude in his presence and overwhelms and disheartens him."⁸¹ The Negro's great hopes upon emancipation had been blasted by unequal competition:

Yesterday at the handles of a plow; to-day at the helm of State. Yesterday an honored barber; to-day the governor of a commonwealth. Yesterday a faithful coachman; to-day a legislator.

⁷⁹Ibid., 83-84.

⁸⁰"The Creed of the Old South," Atlantic Monthly, LXIX (1892), 86.

⁸¹The Exodus, 2.

Yesterday a humble, plain, respectful field-hand; to-day a member of Congress. Poor yesterday and a thrall as well; to-day he is courted, caressed, and taken into the confidence, the counsels, and the patronage of the learned, the powerful and great. Yesterday he drove a cart; to-day he is a justice of the peace;--not for his learning in legal lore, but for his African descent. Penniless to-day he is told, and believes it, that to-morrow he 'will receive from the general government forty acres and a mule.' Alas! to him it is all dead leaves and chaff. His elevation was transitory. His hopes were not realized. His pretended friends pledged, warned, and promised--only to drop him on the cold rocks. The South following the example of the North, has gradually reduced the negro to a plane as unimportant and as destitute of distinction as that of the negro of Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and New York. A thousand things combine to fill him with feelings of discontent.⁸²

Occasionally a Negro could be found to support Marshall's emigration schemes. W. H. Council advocated emigration to Africa, though "50,000 professors and preachers" of his race hurled "anathemas of excommunication" at him.⁸³ Bishop Henry McNeal Turner of the African Methodist Episcopal Church also urged Negroes to abandon hope in America and look to Africa.⁸⁴ Bishop Lucius H. Halsey of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, agreeing

⁸²Ibid., 3.

⁸³"The Future of the Negro," North American Review, CXXIX (1884), 575-576.

⁸⁴Clarence A. Bacote, "Negro Proscriptions, Protests, and Proposed Solutions in Georgia, 1880-1908," Journal of Southern History, XXV (1957), 489.

that the South would never accept Negroes other than as a submerged people, requested Congress to set aside territory in the West for the blacks.⁸⁵

At the same time that some of its "best thinkers" advocated emigration, the South worried about the effect upon its labor system. The very next cotton crop might be endangered.⁸⁶ Even the movement of Negroes to the cotton lands of the Southwest "was alarming to the white planters left behind."⁸⁷ The Christian Advocate admitted that Negroes, though somewhat lacking in industry, nevertheless performed a vast amount of work satisfactorily. Besides, it would take generations to replace the emigrants, and "we should think it a poor exchange to swap off a million . . . negroes for an equal number of Italian Dagoes or Hungarian miners."⁸⁸

Methodist Bishop Charles B. Galloway also worried about the deportation of Negroes in consequence of what he

⁸⁵Ibid., 493-494.

⁸⁶Carrollton West Alabamian, January 25, 1871.

⁸⁷King, "The Great South: Down the Mississippi--The Labor Question--Arkansas," Scribner's Monthly, VIII (1874), 649.

⁸⁸April 4, 1891.

took to be a widespread restlessness induced by lynching, the widening gulf of separation, and threatened curtailment of Negro education. They were quietly moving, and, if they continued to do so, the South faced industrial disaster: "Already the scarcity of labor is the despair of large landowners."⁸⁹ According to Robert Dabney, the South was on the threshold of a brilliant future if the Negroes remained to practice their vocation as the world's finest laborers.⁹⁰ Others agreed that the Negroes could not be spared without great loss to agriculture and business; an editor suggested exporting the bright, trouble-making mulatto and keeping the dull, black, hard working Negroes.⁹¹

Reaction to the migration of Negroes to Kansas and other Northern and Western states, during 1879 and thereabouts, revealed the planter's intention to keep his laborers home.⁹² A convention of white and black leaders

⁸⁹The South and the Negro, 5-7.

⁹⁰"What the Negro Did for the Old South," The Southern States Farm Magazine, V (1898), 478-479.

⁹¹Charleston News and Courier, August 6, 1878.

⁹²Saloutos, Farmer Movements in the South, 1865-1933, 57; L. A. Dutto, "The Negroes in Mississippi," Catholic World, XLVI (1888), 578. Small white farmers and tenants were for the Exodus. Wharton, Negroes in Mississippi, 114-115.

at Vicksburg, May 6-7, 1879, controlled by whites, charged that insidious reports that the Negro's rights were endangered had stimulated the Negroes to emigrate to Kansas. The convention sought to stop the exodus by promises to use its influence to protect the Negro's rights.⁹³

Newspapers urged Negroes not to be seduced by rascally agents who cared no more for them than for cattle, or by politicians who wished to use them to win control of doubtful states; they should stay in the South and "pick cotton at good wages."⁹⁴ Letters by Negroes against the exodus, and news items about disillusioned emigrants returning South, were featured.⁹⁵ Planters on occasion tried to bribe Negro leaders to speak against emigration. Laborers were paid in drafts good at local stores to keep them from leaving, and local officials preferred false charges against departing Negroes. Crowds of immigrants waiting for transportation were broken up and exodus leaders beaten and kidnapped, and, perhaps most effective

⁹³Woodson, Century of Migration, 135-137; Wharton, Negroes in Mississippi, 115.

⁹⁴Atlanta Constitution, September 28, 1879.

⁹⁵Sunny South, May 10, December 27, 1879.

of all, Southern governments restricted the "privileges" of emigration agents.⁹⁶

A few whites believed that the South would be a happier country without Negroes, but most of them merely engaged in idle talk until the hint of an exodus revealed to them how much they depended upon black workers. Similarly, many whites appeared to be greatly interested in attracting immigrants to their region. But the truth of the matter was, Southerners had little use for immigrants unless they would "work like niggers," and support the white man's party; and few immigrants were willing to come, and fewer still to remain, on these terms.

⁹⁶Tindall, South Carolina Negroes, 156, 179-180; Woodson, Century of Migration, 137-138; Wharton, Negroes in Mississippi, 115, 195; Sunny South, May 30, 1879.

CHAPTER XIV

COERCION OF THE BLACK WORKER

Immediately following emancipation, Southerners revealed their intention toward the freedmen. Planters seemed "unable to understand that work could be other than a form of slavery, or that it could be accomplished without some prodigious binding and obligating of the hireling to the employer." Provisions pregnant with meaning were inserted in contracts:

Negroes must be respectful and polite; if they were not respectful and polite they must pay a fine for each offense; they must admit no one on their premises unless by consent of the landowner; they must have a quiet household and not keep too many dogs; they must not go off the plantation without leave. The idea seemed to be that if the laborer were not bound body and soul he would be of no use.¹

Partly from habit, partly from calculation, the planter hoped to maintain a control of his labor force almost as rigid as it had ever been. "As a result some Negroes could hardly tell the difference between slavery and freedom: "Missus done keep me in slave times totin' milk, an' pickin' cotton, an' now de black 'uns is free, an' gwine to de skule 'cept us 'uns, an' 'pears like we hev to tote all de milk, an' pick

¹De Forest, Union Officer in Reconstruction, 58-60.

de cotton, an' work jes' de same."²

In order to avoid any semblance of a free labor market, planters began to hold meetings as early as 1865 to establish a common front. In many counties of Virginia, especially where the Negro element was large and powerful, planters organized to set wages, and in some instances, agreed not to hire workers who applied for work without recommendations.³ This policy was understood by freedmen and their guardians as an effort to keep the Negroes landless and assure whites the benefits of slavery without its inconvenience. A Virginia district commander of the Freedmen's Bureau therefore issued a general order in July, 1865, forbidding citizens to band themselves together for the purpose of agreeing on remuneration for the labor of freedmen. That authority was reserved to the Freedmen's Bureau.⁴ Virginians looked upon the Bureau's intervention as the work of 'nigger-radicals" and vindictive politicians.⁵

²Waterbury, Seven Years among the Freedmen, 71.

³McConnell, Negroes and their Treatment in Virginia, 33; see also Wharton, Negroes in Mississippi, 94.

⁴McConnell, Negroes and their Treatment in Virginia, 35-36. General O. O. Howard thought of the Bureau as the freedmen's shield against "the imposition of employers, the cruelty of enemies, and unfairness of the courts," Freedmen's Bureau, Report of the Commissioner (1866) (Washington, 1866), 2.

⁵McConnell, Negroes and Their Treatment in Virginia, 44.

In other states also planters formed associations to keep down the price of labor, agreeing in some instances to offer no more than five dollars a month. Dissatisfied freedmen appealed to Bureau officers, who insisted upon a much higher wage, and the cry was then raised that freedmen had been encouraged in idleness.⁶ Negro and Bureau opposition proved sufficient to defeat the first attempts to fix county-wide wages by means of associations. The failure was, however, only in open and formal combination. General agreement on wages and conditions of labor tended to be reached in practice, and to become customary.

Agitation for uniform labor policies among planters was kept up. In 1870 Col. D. Wyatt Aiken addressed the Agricultural Society of Barnwell, South Carolina, on the need for organization. Condemning the share-crop system, he warned planters against admitting to partnership men whose stock in trade was animal strength. "Their presumption assured our submission; our submission is their ruin; their ruin is our failure." Such had been the state of agriculture since the inception of the new order of plantation economy. Aiken proposed the buying and selling of agricultural

⁶Freedmen's Bureau, Report of the Commissioner (1866, 2. See also Saloutos, Farmer Movements in the South, 1865-1933, 16.

labor "as any other commodity." But the price of this commodity should not be set in a free market; rather, it must be fixed by the planters, who by proper combination could secure themselves "against the preponderant influence of the inferior race."⁷

On rare occasions Negroes ventured publicly to protest the policy that Colonel Aiken advocated. Thus a colored state convention in Nashville in 1871 dispatched a memorial to Congress praying for protection against clubs and associations formed to control Negro labor.⁸

The West Alabamian in June, 1872, called for harmony of action among planters in directing labor,⁹ and two years later endorsed the resolution of a citizens' committee which demanded uniformity in labor policy and urged planters to exercise close control over their Negro hands. Local committees in Alabama requested all planters to refuse work to any Negro who had been fired by another employer, who was still in debt to a former employer, or who had rendered himself obnoxious to the general community.¹⁰ The united

⁷A Practical Paper on Plantation Economy (Columbia, S. C., 1872), extract printed in the Carrollton West Alabamian, January 29, 1873.

⁸Cited in Taylor, The Negro in Tennessee, 131.

⁹June 12, 1872.

¹⁰Carrollton West Alabamian, December 23, 1874.

action of employers was, however, never thorough enough to suit the whites, who insisted that discipline was lax and wages exorbitant.¹¹

Legislation was required to make legal and effective the coercion deemed necessary to manage the freedmen's labor. Soon after Lee's surrender, the Lynchburg Virginian declared that magistrates and municipal officers should be permitted "to hold a rod in terrorem" over wandering, idle creatures. Nothing short of the most efficient police system would "prevent strolling, vagrancy, theft, and the utter destruction of or serious injury to our industrial system."¹² In the fall of 1865 this journal urged that "the penalty of vagrancy should be virtual servitude and apprenticeship to labor of some kind for a limited period, for only by some such means as these will we be able to make this character of labor available."¹³ Here is the spirit of the Black Codes, the later vagrancy legislation, and the convict lease system.

The Black Codes were enacted in response to a demand

¹¹"Letter to the Editor," from Madison Station, Mississippi, Louisville Home and Farm, January 15, 1880.

¹²June 12, 1865, cited in McConnell, Negroes and Their Treatment in Virginia, 45-46.

¹³November 4, 1865, cited in ibid., 46.

for extraordinary control over the freedmen. The Louisiana Code abridged the freedom of agricultural labor, limited its mobility, and authorized the use of force to make the Negroes work. The Negroes were enjoined not to form unions, nor to strike, while anyone "tampering" with them was subject to fine and imprisonment. The freedman must contract for a year's labor and include his family in the agreement. If he quit, he forfeited his wages. If he was refractory, fines were exacted from him. Justices of the peace, planters themselves, were charged with the protection of the Negro workers.¹⁴

The labor legislation of Texas in 1866 permitted the planter to fine his laborers, and to deduct the fine from wages. Fines could be imposed for neglect, disobedience, impertinence, malingering, and like offenses. If the Negro refused to work he could be jailed. When he deserted an employer, no other was allowed to hire him under penalty of heavy fine. Although the Freedmen's Bureau suspended the operation of these laws, and similar ones in other states, its power was not felt in every community. Especially was this true in Texas where the Bureau was unable to reach

¹⁴Roger Shugg, Origin of Class Struggle in Louisiana: A Social History of White Farmers and Laborers during Slavery and After, 1840-1875 (Baton Rouge, 1939), 212-214.

across more than one-third of the state.¹⁵

The Johnson governments, together with their labor legislation, were shoved aside by the Radicals, but Southerners continued to demand special legislation to govern the labor of freedmen. The Negro was unproductive, it was widely believed, because he had escaped from white control or had been alienated from the direction of men who knew him well. Planters blamed the army, the Freedmen's Bureau, the Loyal League, and the general policy of the national government for turning industrious slaves into lazy freedmen. The Freedmen's Bureau, an especial object of complaint, did not merely take the place of the old master in distributing food and clothing; it also subverted his authority by setting up special courts and by regulating conditions of labor and determining wages.¹⁶ It went so far as to provide dissatisfied Negroes with free transportation from a district in South Carolina to more promising areas in order to force local planters to raise wages and offer better conditions.¹⁷

¹⁵Freedmen's Bureau, Report of the Commissioner for 1867, 65-66.

¹⁶Ibid., Reports of 1866, 1867, 1868, and 1869, passim; Freedmen's Bureau, Circulars, passim. For a detailed account see Paul S. Peirce, The Freedmen's Bureau: A Chapter in the History of Reconstruction (Iowa City, 1904); 129-160.

¹⁷Freedmen's Bureau, Report of the Commissioner for 1867, 52.

In view of the South's definition of the Negro's role as laborer, any agency which interposed itself between planter and worker was sure to be denounced. The New Orleans Daily Crescent missed few opportunities to criticize the Bureau for interfering with labor relations. According to this journal, the Bureau had transferred an army of clergymen from their pulpits in New England to its offices in the South. These fanatics based policy on the assumption that the planter was a monster and the Negro a darling. Teaching the Negro to expect immunity for any act, they undermined the Southern agricultural interest; they encouraged the Negro's inclination to idleness and assisted him to abandon the farm where he was needed and go off to cities where he was unwanted. Nevertheless, planters ought not to lose hope, for the "impracticable views of a fanatical pulpit cannot long be permitted to obstruct the prosperity of agriculture."¹⁸

Governor Benjamin G. Humphreys of Mississippi in January, 1866, denounced the Bureau for stepping between the planter and the Negro and bringing ruin on the land. To Humphreys, four years of cruel war, marked by disgraceful vandalism, "was scarcely more blighting and destructive to the homes of the white men, and impoverishing and degrading

¹⁸See, for example, the New Orleans Daily Crescent, October 16, 19, 23, 1865; December 11, 1867; February 7, 1868.

to the negro, than has resulted in the last six months from the administration of this black incubus."¹⁹

The Southern mind entertained no variations on the theme that the Bureau ruined the Negro and set him against the white man's beneficent influence. A generation later, Hilary A. Herbert censured the Bureau in retrospect because it had "organized chaos" by demoralizing labor, when "the first lesson in the hand-book of liberty for the freedman obviously was that in the sweat of his face he must earn his bread."²⁰ H. G. Turner charged the Bureau with attracting the Negroes to the towns where it "located schools and dispensed provisions, and mendicancy and prejudice."²¹ Thomas Nelson Page thought that the work of the army and then of the Bureau in luring freedmen from the fields to the ration dispensaries had initiated the lamentable change in the old relations between the planter and his laborers.²²

The Freedmen's Bureau existed only for a moment, but it was succeeded by unfriendly carpetbag governments which brought the Negro actively into politics. Southerners

¹⁹Quoted in "Monthly Record of Events," Harper's Magazine, XXXII (1866), 261.

²⁰"Reconstruction at Washington," Why the Solid South?, 18.

²¹"Reconstruction in Georgia," Why the Solid South?, 118-119.

²²Page, The Negro: The Southerner's Problem, 30-31.

vehemently opposed this development both because they believed that uneducated servants had no business in government and because they feared that political power would be used to destroy white supremacy. A principal lesser complaint against the Negro's participation in politics was that it disturbed his labor. Flattered by his importance as a political element, the Negro was no longer content to plow the land or chop the cotton. "Lofty duties of citizenship" called him from field and barnyard. When he was inspired by the chance for office, perhaps a seat in Congress, and the opportunity to rearrange the social order, was there any reason to wonder, the white employer asked, that the Negro had become lazy and untrustworthy, involved in party organization, riots, marching, and drum beating.²³

* * *

With the shiftless character of the uncontrolled Negro accepted as an axiom, the question arose during Reconstruction, "How can the freedman's labor be managed best?" Whatever system was adopted, be it share-cropping or wages or some variation of these, the Negro, sheltered, clothed, and

²³Puryear, The Public School and Its Relation to the Negro, 20-21; Richard B. Elder, "Country Life in Virginia Now-a-days," Lippincott's Magazine, IX (1872), 347-351; De Leon, "The New South," Harper's Magazine, XLVII (1874), 271; King, "The Great South: Down to Mississippi: The Labor Question--Arkansas," Scribner's Monthly, VIII (1874), 653-654; Carrollton West Alabamian, October 30, 1872; September 1, 1875; September 29, 1875.

directed by the planter, tended to revert to a routine like that of slavery, though one less severe in discipline.

In the search for suitable labor policies to replace bondage, whites sometimes debated in confusion, and occasionally surrendered to despair. In his gloomier moods, the Southerner felt there was no hope for his region. The Negro would not work. Politics were debased. The South was condemned to stagnation. A Texas planter, unable to deal with Negroes under changed circumstances, turned his plantation over to a son who managed the freedmen by means his father could not adjust to.²⁴ A Louisianian "weary of the whole subject of black versus white," expected fresh humiliations in a thousand changes, and would be glad to see the last Negro vanish from the soil.²⁵ An old South Carolinian resolved to raise a little corn and a few hogs, but never again to plant cotton, because "the niggers won't work and all the spirit was out of him anyway."²⁶

Yet the South's purpose to hold its black labor force in subjection was generally firm despite the moments of indecision. The first impulse was to refuse work to freedmen

²⁴King, "The Great South: The South Carolina Problem: The Epoch of Transition," Scribner's Monthly, VIII (1874), 134.

²⁵Ibid., 135.

²⁶Hancock, The South after Gettysburg, 198.

in order to force them to acknowledge dependence. This strategy could not be adopted, however, for the war-crippled planter, though loath to admit it, was as dependent upon the Negro as the Negro was upon him.²⁷ Failing to compel the Negro to come begging, he decided to employ the old discipline in combination with low wages, or to turn to sharecropping. Either system was compatible with a status for the Negro verging on slavery.²⁸ On some plantations there might be a dozen squads, each working on a different plan, the planter hoping to find out which system would be most advantageous to him and most binding upon the freedmen.²⁹

The lease system was quickly rejected. Aside from the fact that a freedman owning nothing but his labor could hardly get sufficient capital to rent and work land, leasing did not commend itself to the whites who were reluctant to abandon authority over the freedman's activities. Indeed, a good deal of hysterical opposition was raised at the thought that Negroes might become renters. To lease land, according

²⁷Ibid., 193; N. E. Cobleigh, "Southern Reconstruction," Methodist Quarterly Review, XLII (1870), 389.

²⁸Caroline E. MacGill, "Immigration into the Southern States," The South in the Building of the Nation, VI, 592; George K. Holmes, "The Peons of the South," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, IV (1893), 265-274; Freedmen's Bureau, Report of the Commissioner (1866, 1867), passim.

²⁹King, "The Great South: Down the Mississippi: The Labor Question--Arkansas," Scribner's Monthly, VIII (1874), 663.

to the Plantation, was to locate Tom, Dick, and Harry at independent farming, "to set up a moral pesthouse--a source of temptation to idleness, discontent and dishonesty right around you. . . ."30 Others objected to the lease system because freedmen, like children, required direction, else their ineradicable carelessness led to general neglect.³¹ An Alabama editor denounced planters who rented land to Negroes as undermining the labor system. Lazy and impecunious renters consumed improvements, while raising nothing more than grass. In the meantime they stole all the poultry and robbed all the cornfields in the neighborhood. But under proper restraints, "500 field hands would produce 1500 bales of cotton."³²

Sharecropping was another possibility. Some liked this arrangement because it bound the Negro to the land for at least a season. Though whites as well as blacks were comprehended by sharecropping, the Negro was the more vulnerable to control and exploitation. Despite the

³⁰Plantation, II (1871), 216, cited by Coulter, The South during Reconstruction, 79; Wharton, Negroes in Mississippi, 64.

³¹De Leon, "The New South," Harper's Magazine, XLVII (1874), 276.

³²Carrollton West Alabamian, February 16, 1870.

opportunities for advancement that steady workers might seem to enjoy in good times, in practice the sharecropper did not get ahead. The system made impossible demands on a people trained in slavery, and merchants and plantation storekeepers, with their markups, high interest rates, and opportunities for deceit and fraud, often relieved the sharecropper of the potential savings needed to climb the agricultural ladder. Rarely did a freedman find that his season's toil had done anything more than square accounts.³³ Sharecropping had the advantages of making the laborer more reliable.³⁴ But there were serious weaknesses in the share system: the black wanted a part in planning, was inclined to neglect the crop, and more often than not was dissatisfied with his portion of the profits.

The wage hand's time belonged entirely to the planter. There was, however, the danger that wage payments could lead to weekly declarations of independence. To prevent this, the Southern Farm and Home suggested that the laborer be hired for a year, and that he receive one-half his wages

³³Freedmen's Bureau, Report of the Commissioner for 1867, 52; King, "The Great South: Old and New Louisiana II," Scribner's Monthly, VII (1873), 133; Matthew Brown Hammond, "Agricultural Credit and Crop Mortgages," The South in the Building of the Nation, VI, 422-424.

³⁴De Leon, "The New South," Harper's Magazine, XLVII (1874), 272.

each month, until the year's end. And the planter should furnish rations.³⁵

Wages, some openly asserted, should be low enough to bring in hunger as an ally and to maintain the Negro in a dependent relation. Hunger was even more effective than the lash used to be, an old planter declared. Necessity had become the true "higher law" for the freedman.³⁶ An editor, incensed at the Negro's power to bargain, argued that planters should reduce wages, because labor ought not dictate to capital.³⁷ Alabama would then come up to the standard of Georgia, where determined planters had brought the Negro "under splendid control."³⁸ Although many planters were scrupulous to avoid abuses in the payment of wages, low though they may have been, it is not surprising that some of them were charged with retardation of wages during the existence of the Freedmen's Bureau,³⁹ or were later inclined to hand out tickets redeemable in staples at the

³⁵Printed in Carrollton West Alabamian, June 1, 1870.

³⁶De Leon, "The New South," Harper's Magazine, XLVII (1874), 271; see also King, "The Great South: Down the Mississippi: The Labor Question--Arkansas," Scribner's Monthly, VIII (1874), 649.

³⁷Carrollton West Alabamian, December 25, 1872.

³⁸Ibid., February 26, 1873.

³⁹De Forest, Union Officer in the Reconstruction, 29-30; Freedmen's Bureau, Report of the Commissioner (1867), passim.

end of the month.⁴⁰ In any case, the Southerner was inclined to believe, Negroes willingly accepted low wages and remained perfectly content with the humblest living conditions.⁴¹

Control of Negro workers became so effective as Radical power in the South waned that the whites were able to declare with supreme confidence that their laborers willingly accepted low wages, and never entertained the thought of protesting. Occasionally, however, the whites were rudely shocked.

On the eve of the Radical collapse in South Carolina, workers along the Combahee River struck the rice plantations in protest against a wage cut.⁴² Planters of the region, acting as a body, reduced the daily wage from fifty to forty cents. Lower income, together with the grievance of some workers against being paid in checks good only at the plantation store, led the Negroes to join together in "insurrection."

⁴⁰De Leon, "The New South," Harper's Magazine, XLVII (1874), 273.

⁴¹Bruce, The Rise of the New South, 5.

⁴²The account which follows is based on the editorials and news stories of the Charleston Journal of Commerce and the Charleston News and Courier. See the Journal of Commerce, May 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 29; August 14, 17, 23, 25; September 12, 18, 21, 22, 28; October 11, 27, 28; November 2, 4, 8, 1876. See the News and Courier, May 23, 27, 29, 30, 31; June 1; August 25; September 5, 9, 15, 16; October 27, 28, 30; November 9, 1876.

The strikers went from plantation to plantation calling on all hands to quit work, and carrying away by force those who refused. Committees approached planters with an offer to return to work if the wage cut was rescinded, but the planters, sticking together, refused. Whites from outside the district sent in "volunteers," the Negro leaders were arrested, planters relented, and the strike ended in June.

How could the strike be explained? The Negroes surely were not responsible, for they lacked the intelligence, the capacity for organization, and the desire for improvement implied by the extent and nature of the strike. The Radicals, low whites and rebellious mulattoes, must have worked up the "insurrection" as a political device to marshall the slavish blacks for the fall elections and to win support from Yankee meddlers. Although Radicals were not in evidence and Negro leaders marched the mobs through the plantation country, investigation would undoubtedly show that Radicals harangued the Negroes at midnight, in cabin and grove, because the strike manifested a "well defined policy of communistic demagoguery." When the Negroes rose again at harvest time in August local white people advocated force to compel a return to duty. Extra-legal volunteers were called upon to apply the required force.

Whites from neighboring regions exercised a restraining but temporary influence. Wade Hampton then marched through the state with a large semi-military entourage seeking to sweep out of office the Radical government which permitted such disgraceful things as the Combahee strike. Hampton made a tactical error. When he came into the Combahee region with only "600-800 cavalry" he encountered heckling, but when his escort was reinforced to approximately 1,200 mounted men and 2,000 foot soldiers of the "Red Shirt" variety, he was not again interrupted. Although Hampton lost at some of the polls in the region, he won the state. Thereafter, with the machinery of government in the hands of whites, the Negro worker was helpless indeed.

* * *

Southerners had defended the Black Codes as being milder than Northern vagrancy laws. Admittedly they had proved impolitic, but they had not been unjust. When whites regained control of Southern governments the objects of the Black Codes were achieved both through the unequal application of the laws and through measures aimed particularly at the Negro laborer. Examples are to be found in laws against "enticing" Negroes from the landlord or employer, providing for imprisonment or fine of laborers who received an advance but refused to do the work agreed in contract,

and legalizing verbal contracts--all of which enabled the landlord to keep his Negroes in a state of virtual peonage.⁴³

Negroes of Tennessee in convention at Nashville in May, 1875, complained of a vagrancy act by which unemployed members of their race were put in the county workhouse and of a labor law which compelled them to remain with their employers. These laws, the convention declared, were calculated to place the Negro race in practical servitude. Noting that the legislation nominally did not discriminate between races, the convention declared that it knew of not one instance when it had been applied to whites, nor did anyone expect this to be done. The Nashville convention also focused attention on the uses of convict labor. Penal labor, employed on farms and railroads and in the mines, drove the Negro's wages below the subsistence level. Moreover, Negroes themselves were compelled, the convention asserted, to do the work of driving down wages, many of them having been sentenced under the vagrancy law.⁴⁴ In fact nine-tenths of the convict laborers were Negroes. Most

⁴³Tindall, South Carolina Negroes, 112-113; Taylor, Negroes in Tennessee, 115; Wharton, Negroes in Mississippi, 87-93.

⁴⁴Cited in Taylor, The Negro in Tennessee, 115-116.

white convicts were kept in prison.⁴⁵

Whites corroborated the Negro's accusations. The Charleston News and Courier, recognizing the coercive effect of the convict-lease system on the Negro community, demanded that idle and vicious Negroes in Charleston be driven to the fields or sentenced to the chain gang, both to make them useful and to warn others that they must labor or endure a like fate.⁴⁶

Southerners argued that slavery had had a deterrent effect upon the criminal instincts of the Negroes, and that, when the instincts broke through anyway, the master had seen to the punishment. Freeing the slaves had resulted in an ever increasing number of criminals. Liberty meant license to the freedmen, and the jails overflowed.⁴⁷ The

⁴⁵William O. Scroggs, "Convict and Apprenticed Labor in the South," The South in the Building of the Nation, VI, 49. See also Fletcher M. Green, "Some Aspects of the Convict Lease System in the Southern States," Essays in Southern History, 122; Tindall, South Carolina Negroes, 267-268; Wharton, Negroes in Mississippi, 237-242; Bacote, "Negro Proscription, Protests, and Proposed Solutions in Georgia," 486-487.

⁴⁶September 10, 1898.

⁴⁷P. A. Bruce, "A Tobacco Plantation," Lippincott's Magazine, XXXVI (1895), 533-536; Robert Dabney, "What the Negro Did for the Old South," Southern States Farm Magazine, V (1898), 477-482; Rev. W. A. Guerry, "The Negro in Relation to Religion," Race Problems in the South, 124-134; Sunny South, August 31, 1901; Page, The Negro: The Southerner's Problem, 76-77.

convict-lease system followed, Southerners explained, because there were too many criminals for the few jails to handle, and the states were too poor to build new ones. Besides, the leasing proved profitable to the states and to the lessee. By 1877 every one of the former Confederate states leased its convicts, mostly Negroes.⁴⁸

Under the lease system convicts worked in gangs, and usually were controlled entirely by the lessees, who employed them on canals and railroads, on farms, and in mines. Much of the tunneling of the Blue Ridge Mountains for the old Western Carolina Railway was done by convicts. In 1878 Georgia's convicts were scattered about the state in fourteen camps. In 1882 Alabama convicts were in the hands of many different lessees. In 1880 Mississippi leased practically all its convicts to the highest bidder. In this state and in Louisiana and Arkansas subleasing was practiced. In Florida most of the prisoners were leased to turpentine farms.⁴⁹ The convict was regarded by the state and the lessee as a source of revenue, a slave under a new dispensation. Few entertained any idea of rehabilitation.

⁴⁸Scroggs, "Convict and Apprenticed Labor in the South," The South in the Building of the Nation, VI, 48-49.

⁴⁹Ibid., 49-50.

Discipline in the camps was severe, and the death rate was appalling.⁵⁰

Charges by Northern radicals that Georgia's penal system discriminated against Negroes and reestablished a form of slavery were, according to the Atlanta Constitution, mere "maudlin sentiment." "A convict system that does not involve the severest form of slavery fails to punish crime," the editor claimed. It was true that there were more convict Negroes than whites in Georgia, but the law was applied with equal justice to both races, and the differential existed because of the "instinctive inaptitude" of Negroes in distinguishing between what was theirs and what they wanted to be theirs. If there were

⁵⁰For a devastating indictment of the least system on these grounds see George W. Cable, "The Convict Lease System in the Southern States," Century Magazine, V (1883-1884), 582-599. In 1879 Governor O. M. Roberts of Texas stated: "To put a man or boy, who is not used to work, in a wood-chopping camp and require him to do a good day's work in the heat of summer, and in the cold of winter, is simply to kill him." Texas State Library, Archive and History Department, Governors' Message: Coke to Ross, 332. A reform movement made some headway in the nineteenth century. See Jane Zimmerman, "The Penal Reform Movement in the South during the Progressive Era, 1890-1917," Journal of Southern History, XVII (1951), 462-492.

instances of extreme cruelty, the same was true under any other system.⁵¹

The Charleston News and Courier in 1898 exhibited the Georgia lease system as a model. The old penal methods had brought in profits to the state of only \$1,600, because of administrative costs, but the new arrangement, whereby 1,800 convicts were hired out for \$185,000 a year, promised to return a profit of \$100,000. The News and Courier hoped that provisions requiring clean quarters and humane treatment would be strictly enforced, as experience had proved the leasing system subject to abuse.⁵²

Louisianians also liked the convict-lease system. Private citizens, it was said, worked the prisoners more efficiently than the state did, and this was the "only way to lift the burden of maintaining convicts off the State Treasury."⁵³ The "crazy sentimentality" which attacked the beneficent and inexpensive system as an outrage on humanity failed to take into account the fact that the essence of punishment was the infliction of suffering.⁵⁴

⁵¹October 3, 1879.

⁵²April 11, 1898.

⁵³Baton Rouge Capitolian-Advocate, August 1, 1882.

⁵⁴Ibid., December 29, 1882.

* * *

The white community's willingness to coerce Negro laborers was dramatically illustrated along the Arkansas-Louisiana border in 1890. Whites near Morehouse, Louisiana, complained that Negroes under contract to them had moved across the border into Arkansas. The white people of Northern Louisiana had called meeting after meeting to which they had invited their Arkansas neighbors to cooperate in regulating labor. Despite this, Arkansawyers encouraged Negro desertion by their mad course in "harboring and protecting labor fugitives," and were, "in truth, arming them with Winchester rifles, in order that they may resist any attempt on the part of the people of North Louisiana to recover . . . their deserting labor that is seeking refuge in their midst." Let the Negro become dissatisfied, then off he fled to the "pest hold" of Chicot County (Arkansas), "land of the black man," "the worst negro-ridden county in the South." Arkansas whites might allow Negroes to carry things with a high hand in Chicot County, but they must understand that if they disturbed labor belonging to Louisianians, they "must take the consequences." A military invasion to return the fugitives was threatened.⁵⁵

⁵⁵The Morehouse Clarion, reprinted in the New Orleans Daily Picayune, August 26, 1890. In 1893 the state militia of North Carolina put down a "mutiny" of Negroes "against their landlords." Smith, "Have American Negroes Too Much Liberty?" Forum, XVI (1893), 176-183.

There were Southerners who endorsed paternalistic means as more effective than naked coercion in controlling Negro labor. The governor of Mississippi, J. M. Stone, thought that the well-being of the South must rest upon happy Negroes, "for no country can be great and prosperous with a discontented peasantry."⁵⁶ Induce the laborer to settle down and become docile by furnishing him a comfortable house and a garden spot. Teach him how to use machinery and make him more efficient and trustworthy. Build a schoolhouse on the farm to bring contentment to the parent and to educate his children in more intelligent labor. Permit the Negro to sing, be loud, enjoy his recreation. Pay him good wages with incentive increases according to merit. Be kind and just. Make only reasonable rules but enforce them rigidly. "Thus let the negro become identified with and attached to the soil upon which he lives," J. B. Killebrew counselled, "and he himself, the land-owner and the country will be advanced by his labor."⁵⁷

To their credit, many Southerners protected exposed Negroes from the ruthless power generated by the white

⁵⁶"The Suppression of Lawlessness in the South," North American Review, CLVIII (1894), 506.

⁵⁷Killebrew, "How to Deal with the Negro," Southern States Farm Magazine, V (1898), 490-491.

community, and concerned themselves with the welfare of their laborers. This type of Southerner was represented by a Mississippi widow who had been so kind to her slaves that not one would leave her after the war. Her wish was the freedmen's law. They deferred to her "as to a mother."⁵⁸

More often than not the Southerner was sincere when he declared that he was a friend of the Negro in his place, and spoke and wrote about the white man's duty to the black. Such leaders of opinion as J. L. M. Curry, Hilary Herbert, Thomas Nelson Page, along with many others, repeatedly admonished fellow Southerners to deal justly with the lowly Negro.⁵⁹ The proponents of kindness usually entertained no thoughts of radical change. They rated blacks as farm laborers, erstwhile slaves, to be elevated, humored, not worked too hard, given nominal benefits, but restrained from emulating the whites. In a sense even they endorsed coercion, for they defended the caste system, which was, ultimately, based on force.

⁵⁸Waterbury, Seven Years among the Freedmen, 39.

⁵⁹On this point see Guion Griffis Johnson, "Southern Paternalism toward Negroes after Emancipation," Journal of Southern History, XXIII (1957), 483-503. See also Sunny South, June 19, 1886; April 20, 1889; April 26, 1890.

CHAPTER XV

NEGRO-WHITE COMPETITION

In the Old South all white men had enjoyed the status conferred by color. Following emancipation, leveling forces were set to work which threatened to obliterate distinction between the poorer whites and the blacks.

During "Radical rule" many whites of the Southeast, in order to avoid the possibility of falling to the Negro's level, were tempted to desert the land of their fathers for Texas, or so it seemed to the West Alabamian:

To come in competition with the negro race as a laborer; to have to work side by side with them in every position where muscle is power, and to see his children growing up side by side with their children as equals and companions, and without the power to prevent it by his honest efforts, are well calculated to make the poor white man gather together his household goods and look for a State where, at least, in a large portion of it, he is free from equality as a laborer.¹

There was in fact a tidal wave of white emigration from the black states to Texas.

At the end of the nineteenth century the Charleston News and Courier showed the same fear that had motivated the West Alabamian twenty seven years earlier. But the

¹January 15, 1873.

News and Courier thought to protect whites from Negro competition by deporting the Negroes. In the meantime racial antagonism between ordinary whites and Negroes was bound to cause trouble.²

Edgar Gardner Murphy also saw racial antagonism as stemming from economic competition between whites and Negroes. Like many other Southern gentlemen, he believed that only the small farmer and poorer whites hated the Negro. Those who now wished "the Negroes to become slaves" were those who "in the past never owned a slave."³ Declaring that these whites needed aid, he warned that it was at the peril "of the South, and of the country, that we forget the poor white boy of the Southern fields!"⁴ This persistent concern encouraged Southern leaders to find means to protect whites from Negro competition, to give them preference in employment.

* * *

Southerners launched a Crusade to establish the factory to maintain white supremacy. On the farm, the Negroes "set the pace for the agricultural labor market of the South," to which whites in the same field were forced to conform,⁵

²December 29, 1900.

³The White Man and the Negro at the South, 24-25.

⁴Ibid., 25-26.

⁵Bruce, Rise of the New South, 27-28.

but the factory offered employment to the whites, divided the poor into white and black, and gave the privileged whites reason to believe in the supremacy of their race.⁶

In Louisiana the movement excited much enthusiasm. A New Orleans journal declared: "It is the duty of State governments and of wealthy men of the South to provide employment for our poor white people A cotton mill is much better than a poor-house."⁷ In this state, however, a mill established in Claiborne Parish failed and actually became a poor house. A few successful ones took hold in New Orleans.⁸

In a few other Southern states the textile industry was successfully established and whites employed in increasing numbers. In 1874 the extraordinary enthusiasm was observed by Edward King over the growing textile industry in South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama, and he commented that the industry was "an outgrowth of a demand for labor for the surplus white population."⁹ The two thousand cotton

⁶Broadus Mitchell, The Rise of the Cotton Mills in the South (Baltimore, 1921), 77-231; Cash, The Mind of the South, 180-185; Carrollton West Alabamian, June 18, June 25, July 23, 1873; Shugg, Origin of Class Struggle in Louisiana, 299.

⁷Commercial Bulletin, December 25, 1866, cited in Shugg, Origin of Class Struggle in Louisiana, 299.

⁸Shugg, Origin of Class Struggle in Louisiana, 299-300.

⁹"The Great South: In the Cotton States: Journeys in Georgia and Alabama," Scribner's Monthly, VIII (1874), 385-412.

mill workers in and around Petersburg, Virginia, were white, he reported.¹⁰ King did not foresee that, partly because of the threat of cheap Negro labor, the "cotton-mill trash," "lint heads," "cotton tails," and "factory rats," though occupying a niche above Negroes, might find themselves on "plantations in a city," housed in company tenements and subjected to unwanted control.¹¹

The potential competition in the mills between white and black labor bore severely upon white women and children. "As the services of the white women are secured at a low rate of wages," P. A. Bruce stated, "there would be no inducement to the mill owners to employ negroes to take their places, even should the white male operatives offer no opposition to the presence of the blacks."¹² Bruce assumed that if the Negroes came in, all the white women would have to leave, and this was certainly the Southern belief. An Alabama journal, in supporting a strike of white operatives at the "People's Cotton Factory," Montgomery, against the employment of a Negro, declared: "This attempt to practice

¹⁰"The Great South: A Ramble in Virginia: From Bristol to the Sea," Scribner's Monthly, VII (1874), 665.

¹¹Cash, Mind of the South, 207-208.

¹²Rise of the New South, 184. See also Charleston News and Courier, February 16, 1891, and De Leon, "Ruin and Reconstruction of the Southern States," Southern Magazine, XIV (1874), 570-571.

a mingling of the races in a Southern cotton mill is equivalent to mixing them in schools, and can do nothing but bring disaster and ruin to any mill that attempts it."¹³

Integrated factories would indeed be as unsettling as mixed schools. Reasons were found, however, for supposing the Negroes unfit to work alongside white machine operatives. The operator of a cotton mill in Columbus, Georgia, explained that Negroes were not employed in his mill because the whirr of spindles put them to sleep. All industrial experts on the black man's nature supported this theory, it was claimed.¹⁴ Lord Bryce was informed and apparently believed that Negroes were decidedly inferior in the textile mills because they were dazed by the humming of machinery.¹⁵ The manager of the Eagle and Phenix mill in Georgia employed only ten Negro yard workers among 800 textile workers, because, he said, "their lack of quickness, sensitiveness to touch, and general sleepy characteristics disqualify them for work which needs the requisites they lack." Better equipped for outdoor work, "they will no

¹³Cited in the Charleston News and Courier, September 11, 1898.

¹⁴De Leon, "The New South," Harper's Magazine, XLVII (1874), 411; King, "The Great South: The Cotton States: I," Scribner's Monthly, VIII (1875), 406.

¹⁵The American Commonwealth, II, 514. See also Wesley, Negro Labor in the United States, 238-239.

doubt always be kept so employed."¹⁶

Although cotton mill owners and managers and other experts glibly ruled out skilled factory labor for Negroes, one manager thought that exceptional Negro youths might have the capacity to learn textile work. He observed, however, that such a training program would require much time, and it was not needed, for there were more than enough whites to supply the mills.¹⁷

In 1898 there were five hundred cotton mills in the South, only three of them employing Negroes.¹⁸ A few experiments with Negro labor in cotton mills were tried and failed, to the delight of the white people. The "Elmwood Manufacturing Company," Columbus, Georgia, proposed to employ Negroes, but the white people would not buy the company's securities, and it went out of business before making any goods.¹⁹ An effort to substitute Negro workers for whites in a textile factory in Charleston in 1890 resulted in a victory for the whites.²⁰ Nine years later Atlanta textile workers won a strike precipitated by the

¹⁶Cited by De Leon, "The New South," Harper's Magazine, XLVII (1874), 411.

¹⁷Ibid., 412-413.

¹⁸Charleston News and Courier, September 11, 1898.

¹⁹Ibid., August 11, 1898.

²⁰Tindall, South Carolina Negroes, 131.

hiring of Negroes.²¹ In Charleston a cotton mill which employed blacks went bankrupt in 1900, an event that Charlestonians took as conclusive proof of the correctness of their preconceptions.²² Another experiment with Negro labor was made at the Coleman cotton mill at Concord, North Carolina, which was Negro owned and operated, only the manager, a Northerner, being white. The mill began operating in 1901 and failed the next year. The Afro-American Cotton Mill Company of Anniston, Alabama, met the same fate.²³

Negro factories might succeed, at least for a time, if their dull, sluggish, and incompetent workers were thrashed like oarsmen in a gallery. The Ashby and Bailey Company, Northern-owned, employed three hundred Negroes, mostly minors, in a textile mill at Fayetteville, North Carolina. The colored superintendent, T. W. Thurston, pleased Southerners by describing his methods. Because kindness would be construed as weakness, he used the lash on children and adults, and on both sexes; anything less severe was a waste of time. All under twenty-one came to

²¹Bruce, Rise of the New South, 184.

²²Ibid., 134.

²³Wesley, Negro Labor in the United States, 240-241.

the plant with certificates from parents permitting corporal punishment. The factory, Thurston said, would fail if operated like white ones, for despotism was necessary where Negroes were concerned.²⁴

Certain jobs in phosphate mines, the lumbering industry, railroad construction, iron works, and textile mills were thought to be tailored to the black man's nature. He was also expected to do well at some tasks in steel plants which required strong muscles, resistance to furnace heat, and qualities of the observer rather than of the thinker.²⁵ Accordingly, colored laborers were welcomed in Southern iron works "except in positions where judgment and prompt action in emergencies were required."²⁶ And in lumbering their adaptation to rough work kept them "freely and profitably employed" in felling and hewing of trees, and in other outdoor work.²⁷

A strike at an iron foundry in Richmond in 1891 illustrates both the determination of whites to control

²⁴Cited in Charleston News and Courier, November 4, 1900.

²⁵Christian Advocate, April 13, 1893.

²⁶Ibid., February 16, 1893.

²⁷De Leon, "The New South," 418. See also Tindall, South Carolina Negroes, 126-129; Wharton, Negroes in Mississippi, 125-127.

desirable jobs and the continued sway of pro-slavery thought. A Southern apologist noted that "although the places at the machines were filled later on by volunteers, and although there were many negroes employed in the works who did not strike, it never occurred to either the management or to the negroes that they could work at the machines, and not one had ever suggested it."²⁸

Since Negroes were unorganized, thoroughly controlled, desperately poor, and accustomed to being despised, their condition invited employers to send agents among them to recruit "scabs." Negro scabs were brought into Northern steel plants chiefly to break strikes. They were used in many smaller labor disputes about 1890 and in large numbers in the great Homestead strike of that year.²⁹ By 1900 the Negro population of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, had reached 27,753.³⁰ In 1898 Negro workers from Alabama were used in Illinois to defeat white miners, and were attacked by mobs. The Republican Governor urged on the mobs without bringing down upon himself the denunciations of those Northern religious journals that had censured similar

²⁸Page, The Negro: The Southerner's Problem, 410.

²⁹Horace R. Cayton and George S. Mitchell, Black Workers and the New Unions (Chapel Hill, 1939), 5-6; Wesley, Negro Labor in the United States, 243-245, 261, 279-280.

³⁰Cayton and Mitchell, Black Workers and the New Unions, 7.

resistance to "Negro domination" in North Carolina.³¹

In the South judicious hints by factory managers were sufficient to warn white workers of limits beyond which they would not go in order to maintain white supremacy. Commonly such hints took the form of assurances that Negroes would not be employed unless the white labor costs rose too high.³² The threat of the Negro strikebreaker was sufficient to reduce the incidence of labor disputes. Occasionally, however, he was called in to make good this threat. An ironmaster of Chattanooga acknowledged that whenever he faced a strike, he replaced whites with Negroes.³³ On the Houston and Texas Railroad in 1890 striking switchmen were replaced by Negroes. Other white workers then struck offering this explanation:

Observation, deep and honest conviction, have taught us that we degenerate in the eyes of all when we acknowledge them [Negroes] our equals, as we are compelled to do, as the position they occupy is on a par, and must necessarily be recognized as equal to ours; and compels us to directly associate with

³¹Christian Advocate, December 1, 1898.

³²N. P. T. Finch of Birmingham, Alabama, quoted in the Charleston News and Courier, September 11, 1898.

³³Taylor, Negroes in Tennessee, 142-143. In 1883 Negroes broke a strike in ironworks in Chattanooga and Nashville, and were put to work at every type of job in the industry. Wesley, Negro Labor in the United States, 243.

them to an unbearable extent.³⁴

Accused of undermining white supremacy, the company replied that it worked the Negroes under the direction of white men, and that it did not employ them by choice but only because the white switchmen refused to work.³⁵ In the neighboring state of Louisiana, in 1873, white longshoremen had had similar trouble with "low, ignorant negroes, who slept under tarpaulins and in barrel houses, and who . . . could afford to work at lower than regular rates." They managed to have many of the Negroes jailed as rioters.³⁶

Partly because of the effective use of the Negro as a preventer and breaker of strikes, Henry W. Grady could boast that the South knew "little or nothing of the fierce hostility that divides labor and capital in other areas."³⁷

³⁴Charleston News and Courier, October 27, 1890. Between 1882 and 1900 strikes in the United States against the employment of Negroes numbered fifty. Wesley, Negro Labor in the United States, 237-238.

³⁵Charleston News and Courier, October 27, 1890. Many southern agrarians would have nothing to do with proposals of Midwestern populists for government ownership of railroads; they feared that with federal ownership whites, especially the young ladies, would be compelled to associate with Negro conductors, Negro flagmen and brakemen, and Negro agents at depots all along the lines. Saloutos, Farmer Movements in the South, 1865-1933, 104.

³⁶New Orleans Picayune, August 24, 1874, cited in Shugg, Origin of Class Struggle in Louisiana, 301-302.

³⁷"In Plain Black and White," Century Magazine, XXIV (1885), 916.

The Negro could be thankful, said the editor of the Southern Bivouac, that his "respect for authority and inaptitude for organization" saved him from the demoralizing labor troubles which prevailed in the North and East.³⁸

Unions might declare that they welcomed laborers without regard to creed, color, or sex; in practice they excluded blacks.³⁹ Negroes sometimes managed, particularly in towns, to form their own unions, such as longshoremen's, carpenters', and mechanics' associations; and the Knights of Labor endeavored to organize both town and country Negroes. Whites were able, however, either to destroy Negro organizations or to render them ineffective. When a Negro union supposed itself strong enough to demand higher wages, the usual outcome was announcement within a few days that the conspiracy had failed and the "deluded blacks" were quietly at work.⁴⁰

³⁸Editorial, "The Negro in the South," II (1897), 712. See also Senator James B. Eustis, "Race Antagonism in the South," Forum, VII (1888), 154.

³⁹Wesley, Negro Labor in the United States, 259. In 1900 Samuel Gompers advised Negroes to establish separate organizations, ibid., 259. See also John R. Commons and Associates, History of Labor in the United States, 4 vols. (New York, 1946; 1st ed., 1918), II, 114, 116, 118, 135.

⁴⁰Sidney K. Kessler, "The Organization of Negroes in the Knights of Labor," Journal of Negro History, XXXVII (1952), 248-276; S. M. Matison, "The Labor Movement and the Negro during Reconstruction," Journal of Negro History, XXXIII (1948), 426-469; Charlottesville (Va.) Weekly Chronicle, June 20, 1879; Tindall, South Carolina Negroes, 113-140; Taylor, Negroes in Tennessee, 132-147; Shugg, Origin of Class Struggle in Louisiana, 301-305.

The presence of two sets of workers, one enjoying slight privileges over the other, and the occasional overt use of the disadvantaged workers to threaten the privileged workers, indicates the heavy burden that whites carried in subordinating Negroes.

This effect of competition, actual or potential, between white and Negro is exhibited in the discussion of the labor problem in P. A. Bruce's The Rise of the New South. As long as white operatives could be obtained at low wages, Bruce wrote, "there is little probability that blacks will be employed in these [cotton] mills."⁴¹ A vast body of poor whites who lived in the hills and mountains without comfort but who possessed a hardy spirit and physical vigor found cotton mill wages very attractive. These hill people became the most contented factory workers in the nation. Unlike the disreputable immigrants of the North, these people were good Anglo-Saxons; their names on the pay rolls of the principal Southern mills were identical with the names on the regimental rosters of the Revolutionary, Mexican, and Civil Wars.⁴²

The great reserve of whites in the Appalachian region, and the numbers of women and children employed in the mills,

⁴¹Bruce, Rise of the New South, 185.

⁴²Ibid., 185-186.

tended to prevent the formation of labor unions in the South. If the whites became refractory the mill owners would supplant them with Negroes. Strikes which did occur were "likely to be only brief in duration, chiefly as the result of the Southern employer's ability to hold the great mass of negro mechanics in terrorem over the heads of the whites." There was and would be "peaceful relations between employer and employee."⁴³

Southern ideas concerning Negro-white competition had not changed perceptibly by 1900. The basic assumption that the Negro was inferior and ought to be exploited remained the starting point for all speculation on the Negro question. Southerners proved adept in adjusting white supremacy to laissez faire economic philosophy, to the great disadvantage of many whites as well as of the Negroes. It seemed to them logical to assert that Negroes would accept the lowest of low wages, when they really meant that Negroes would be forced to accept whatever was offered. The Negro was not permitted to bargain; as a consequence, neither was the white.

Despite hardship borne by many whites in competition with Negroes, even these Southerners derived benefits from

⁴³Ibid., 165.

membership in a privileged race that, in the years after Reconstruction, nullified in part the freedom given slaves. During this period, Negroes were disfranchised and deprived of equal opportunities in education, making it practically impossible for them to rise above the subordinate status to which they were assigned. This caste system of the New South was based, ultimately, upon the intention of whites to exploit former slaves now nominally free. It was in turn justified by the image of the Negro as inferior.

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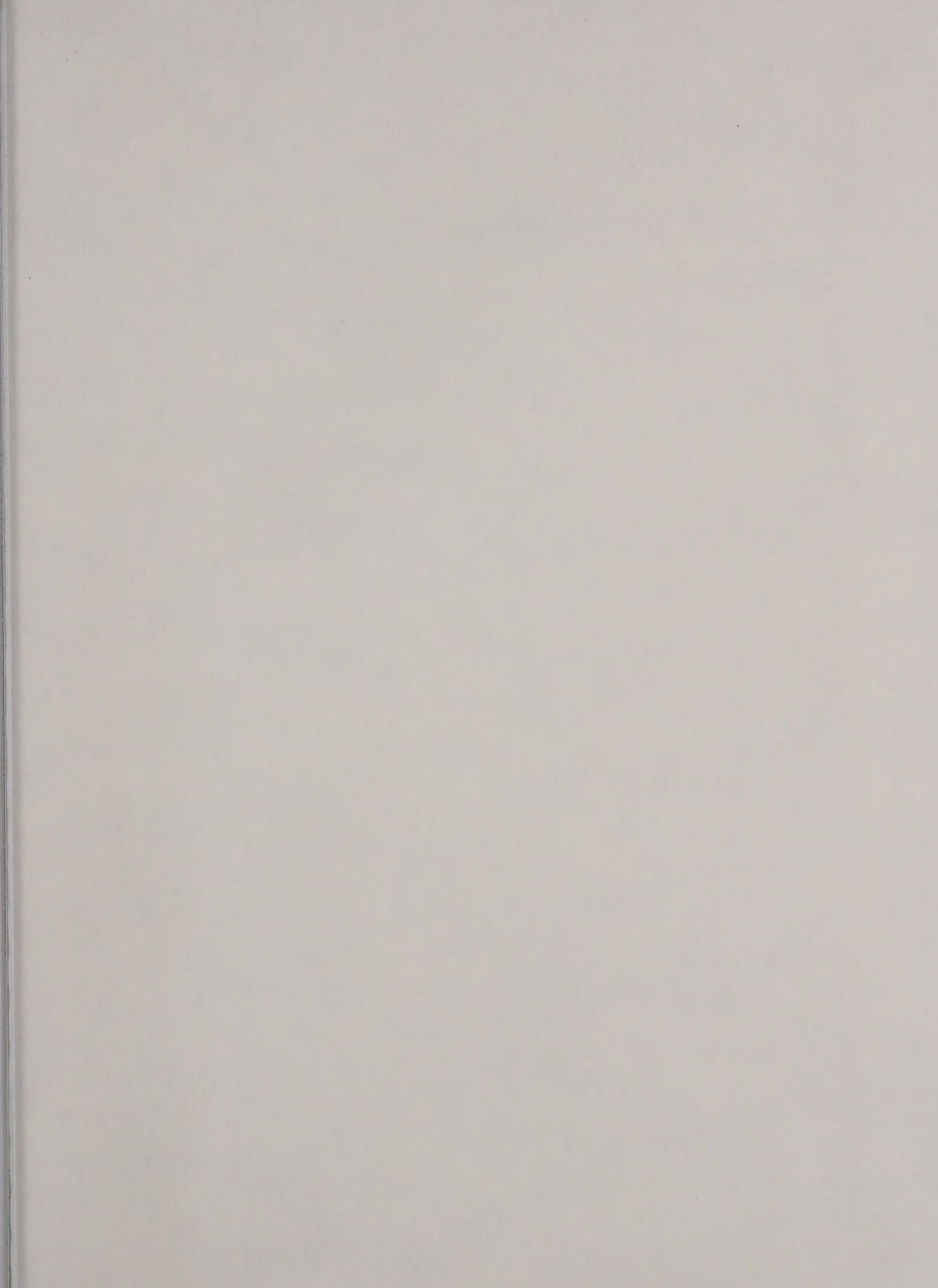
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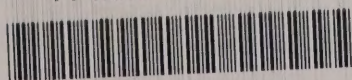
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